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ABSTRACT

Historical developments in rural India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and China are the empirical basis of this study which offers a theory of rural development for all Asia keyed to fundamental humanistic values rather than narrower techno-economic considerations. Previous efforts have often been "top-down" processes tending to serve bureaucracies and rural vested interests instead of the 70 to 80% of Asia's population who are the rural masses. This rural development theory identifies five core concepts: man as the end of development, de-alienation of man from the development process, growth of man's collective personality, participation as the true form of democracy, and self-reliance. This rural ideal necessitates land reform (through mass initiative rather than imposition from above), collectivization (to sustain rural mass power, make optimum use of land and technology, exploit economies of scale, and mobilize mass labor fully), and building infrastructure with collective labor. Village schools and colleges can be important change agents through dissemination of appropriate technology. The education system itself must be turned around since in most Asian countries, it has been functionally irrelevant and socially parasitic, serving to alienate students from rural life. Institutions should evolve from collective need and be continually subject to it. (RS)

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TOWARDS A THEORY
OF
RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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PREFACE

This study seeks to understand how the creative initiative of the people of rural Asia may be released and mobilized for all-round development of their lives.

The concept of development is presented in this study in terms of fundamental humanistic values rather than narrower techno-economic notions of development. The core of this concept is the de-alienation of man vis-a-vis both the material forces of production and society, and a purposeful growth of human personality. Such humanistic philosophy has often been considered at the subjective level; but its historical validity is becoming increasingly apparent. For one thing, disillusionment with the quality of life in today's economically advanced societies is growing among their own peoples, and this growing alienation can be traced to the specific nature of their accumulation process and the social relations on which it has rested. For another, the developing nations of today are confronted by a world-historical framework in which the ideological driving force for accumulation, pertaining to the economically advanced societies, no longer offers a viable road to accumulation itself for the former. The compulsion for seeking alternative driving forces for accumulation even in its narrower conception is therefore mounting.

Not all poor societies of Asia in this sense are at the same stage of historical development. The compulsion suggested above came earliest in China. It has matured in a number of other Asian countries where also the process of redirection of social effort has started. The interaction between internal developments and geo-political constellations places the other countries into various stages in this evolution, including some in which the contradictions have so intensified that the collapse of the old order has come within the realm of possibility. Specially fortuitous situations or developments (e.g., discovery of natural resources, the inflow of massive external assistance) may for individual countries make an exception to this trend; but the broad sweep of history remains.

It seems therefore appropriate that an attempt be made to understand the character of the new driving force for economic and social change that seems to be emerging in Asia, albeit at different paces for different countries, and that seems to offer real possibilities of progress both in material and in human terms. The present study is but a modest step in this direction.

Attention has been focussed in this study on the process of human mobilization as this must be the primary mechanism for accumulation in the general Asian context. The study is not comprehensive in that questions like the interdependence between the rural and non-rural sectors and foreign trade have not been discussed.

The specific empirical basis of the study is provided by historical developments in the rural scene in four countries - India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and China. The first three have been chosen because of the authors' personal familiarity with them; the choice of China has been motivated by a desire to understand, admittedly from secondary sources, the essence of its thrust towards social transformation. Insights have been sought from these experiences as to processes that may promote or hinder development as conceived above. These insights have then been systematized into what may be seen as the beginning of a theory of rural development in the Asian context, and for that matter a theory of development for the Asian countries which are predominantly rural.

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The authors alone, however, remain responsible for the views expressed in this document.

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INTRODUCTION: A QUARTER CENTURY OF (ANTI-) RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Model

Asia is predominantly a rural society. And yet, a quarter century ago, when the Asian countries emerged as politically independent nations from centuries of colonial rule, they adopted a development model which was indifferent if not inimical to rural development. Support for this model which essentially permitted continuation of existing international economic relationships came from two external sources - the developed countries of the West and the developed centrally planned countries.

The model chosen had in principle three major components:

(a) Central planning, control and coordination of the economy as a top-down process;

(b) Industrialization and expansion of the modern sector as a means of rapid economic growth and "take-off";

(c) Assistance from developed countries to bridge the savings or foreign exchange gap whichever was dominant, and transfer of international technology.

It was assumed that the benefits of development of the modern sector would trickle-down and as the economy moved towards take-off, the rural sector would be carried on the back of the urban industrial sector. Meanwhile, the approach required of the tradition-bound peasantry only marginal modernization and necessary supply of food and raw materials for the modern sector. Occasional voices calling for self-reliant national development based on self-sufficient village economy were dismissed as backward and utopian. The growing urban elite forged dependent links with the outside world and alienated themselves from the great bulk of the population who continued to live in the rural areas. The strategy also included some welfare measures, but mainly for the urban masses.

In practice the model failed for two basic reasons:

(1) External aid, both in terms of resources and of adequate transfer of technology failed to materialize at the necessary rate; on the contrary the "gap" kept on widening, leading to increasing dependence on foreign sources and the inevitable loss of autonomy. Repayment of the past debts alone threatened to choke off future development. What was given as aid was withdrawn through adverse terms of trace. Multinational corporations, which were the main conduits for the transfer of technology, extracted an exorbitant price for their know-how and machines while obstructing the means of repayment by restrictive export clauses. The highly capital-intensive, import-substituting technology which was implanted had little relation to real factor endowment, particularly availability of labour

(2) Internal resources for development had to come mainly from rural areas where, having alienated and exploited the peasants, the possibility of transferring surplus labour into realised savings was greatly diminished. On the other hand, the regimes were unable to use coercive methods of capital accumulation which countries with stronger administrative systems and commitment have successfully employed even while agricultural production has stagnated.

The model not only failed on its own terms but caused fundamental damage to the possibilities of these nations in mobilizing their own resources, and shaping their own destiny. By borrowing foreign technology, the growth of appropriate local technology was smothered; as a result the developing nations neglected the fostering of their own research capabilities and innovativeness, perpetuating into the future a dependent relationship. The top-down method of centralized planning succeeded in alienating the people without being able to construct an administrative machinery capable of implementing programmes.

The choice between dependence and greater self-reliance had to be faced. Given the character of the regimes, the soft-option of external assistance continued to be preferred and the combination of moderate internal savings and limited foreign aid produced some growth. The very character of development, however, ensured a grossly unequal distribution of the benefits and the disparity grew enormously. Even in the rural areas, when profitable technology finally arrived in the sixties, the primary beneficieries were the richer farmers who had preemptory access to the inputs and the necessary credit. The "green revolution", introduced into an existing iniquitous rural social structure, further exacerbated the problems of inequality. While overall production showed increase in some areas, the polarization in the rural society grew even more.

The magnitude of the problem has finally become too large to be ignored, both internally and internationally. To quote from two recent publications:

> " It is now clear that more than a decade of rapid growth in under-developed countries has been of little or no benefit to perhaps a third of their population. Although the average per capita income of the Third World has increased by 50 percent since 1960, this growth has been very unequally distributed among countries, regions within countries and socio-economic groups. " 1/

> " ..... the crisis of development lies in the poverty of the mass of the Third World, as well as that of others, whose needs, even the most basic - food, habitat, health, education - are not met; it lies, in a large part of the world, in the alienation, whether in misery of in affluence, of the masses, deprived of the means to understand and master their social and political environment ..... " 2/

1/ Chenery, H. in "Redistribution with Growth"
Chenery, H. et al Oxford University Press, 1974, p. xiii

2/ Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, "Another Development"
Development Dialogue No. 1/2, 1975 p.5

The Disenchantment

It took two decades to build the optimistic vision of a steadily developing world community depicted in the report *Partners in Development*;[1] it has taken barely five years for the disenchantment with the process to grow to universal proportions. It is no longer possible to defend either the past strategy of development or its all too visible results. Literature is overburdened with post-mortem critiques of development history which are unanimous on the appalling results and generally candid on the causes of the failure. We do not propose to review this extensive literature whose basic thesis of the continued exploitation of the "peripheral" areas by the "metropolitan" core, both internally and externally, is now scarcely disputed.

It is on remedies, however, that there is little agreement, due mainly to fundamental differences in the definition and objectives of "development". Three different strategies or approaches to development have been identified[2]: "technocratic", "reformist" and "radical", which differ in objectives, ideology used to mobilize support and in the way the benefits of the economic system and growth process are distributed. The technocratic approach, with its emphasis on technological modernization, managerial efficiency and growth in GNP, which held the centre stage for over two decades, is now in disrepute. The debate is seen to be between the reformists, who believe that the system can still be made to work if equitable distribution is built into an essentially growth model,[3] and those who favour a radical approach, re-defining the objectives of development in the direction of rapid social change and redistribution of political power.

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[1] Pearson, L.B. et al, *Partners in Development*, Praeger Publishers, 1969.

[2] Griffin, K. "Rural Development: The Policy Options" in "*Employment in Developing Nations*" Ed. E.O. Edwards, Colombia University Press, 1974, p. 182.

[3] Chenery et al, *op cit*

The Options

The conventional growth model, with or without its reformist component, may perhaps succeed in achieving material progress for a length of time in some Asian countries where conditions seem favourable. These "non-classical" conditions include massive inflow of foreign resources, favourable resource/man ratio and a viable partnership between the national and international bourgeoisie. But such countries (e.g. South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore) constitute but a small proportion of the population of developing Asia.

For the bulk of Asia, the above constellation of conditions is neither existent nor foreseeable. Were the conventional model to succeed, they must rely on the "classical" conditions of capitalist accumulation such as frugality, innovativeness, access to home market and the political and military power to create international markets conducive to industrial growth at home. Due to the demonstration effect, the bourgeoisie of Asia have ceased to be frugal. In most countries they have, in addition, taken on a "comprador" character meaning among other things that much of their consumption expenditure is on foreign rather than domestic goods; this has created the paradox that the bourgeoisie in these countries by their high consumption expenditure on foreign goods is denying the possibility of the expansion of their own market and future accumulation, and is also contributing to the worsening of the balance of payments. Where restrictions on imports are being imposed (e.g. India) the defrugalisation of the bourgeoisie and its directly adverse affects on the possibility of capital accumulation remain. This, coupled with the size of the population in relation to profit-maximising technology which is ever-growing in capital intensity, makes it questionable whether the system can carry its large population on its back. As for innovativeness and access to foreign markets the countries are trapped in a global framework which neither makes local innovativeness attractive nor offers opportunities of the colonial type for seizing external markets.

In view of these realities the conventional growth model hardly offers a viable option today for most of Asia. The compulsions of accumulation itself therefore requires that a different strategy be sought.

Historically the only other known method of accumulation is that of human mobilisation for the conversion of surplus labour into means of production. This mobilization implies (a) collectivist relations of production, (b) choice of appropriate technology and (c) self-reliance which in external relations means economic independence via de-linkage from existing global dominance-dependence relations.

There are several Asian and non-Asian countries which have demonstrated in modern times that a total nation-wide human mobilisation can achieve rates of accumulation even exceeding those given by the capitalistic method at its best. The superiority of this method for most Asian countries today in terms of accumulation and growth is evident. First, resource/man ratio makes the socially optimal technique in these terms considerably more labour-intensive than what would be chosen under the conventional strategy. This optimum implies massive utilization of surplus labour which is made possible only under the collectivist relations of production. Secondly, economic independence will bring an end to resource drain through unequal international exchange as also the loss due to distortion of the economy stemming from external economic domination. Both these factors will reinforce each other and together contribute to accumulation and growth at a much higher rate.

The compelling economic case for mobilisation as the method for accumulation has been supplemented by the demonstration effect of its socio-political feasibility in an increasing number of countries. The inspiration thus generated is interacting with the emerging internal contradictions in the Asian countries, strengthening thereby the positive forces for social change. This is making accumulation through mobilization historically relevant as serious alternative in Asia.

Since mobilization as an accumulation strategy requires the adoption of collectivist relations of production, the implications of this merits discussion.

The Collective and the Development of Man

Historical experience indicates that specific forms of collectivist relations have specific bearings on development in a wider sense.

The ultimate purpose of development must be the development of man - the realization and unfolding of his creative potential. Since this development requires improvement in the material conditions of living so as to fulfill physiological and psychic needs, the role of accumulation in the process of augmentation of production forces via technical progress and expansion of capacity becomes crucial. Without accumulation, man lives in a subsistence or low level of physio-psychic conditions.

In some countries of the world, the capitalistic method of accumulation has succeeded in amassing a vast amount of productive capacity and hence achieving a high level of material life. Nevertheless, not only has a sizeable proportion of the population at the bottom remained in relative deprivation, but also an increasing number of the populace are revealing their alienation from the system - the very source of their affluence.

However, the collectivist method is also not immune to the possibility of degenerating into an alienating system. In the individualistic relations of production, surplus labour has been converted into means of production predominantly owned by a small class of oligopolistic capitalists. The very means of production that the worker has created decide his fate rather than serve him. Virtually a similar phenomenon is taking place under certain forms of apparently collectivist relations of production, where means of production are formally socially owned but controlled in reality by a neo-elite. Relations of production are collectivist in form but individualistic (capitalistic) in essence. To that extent man is being alienated and he is regressing in the plane of his development.

This danger has been recognized in some collectivist countries where a struggle in the superstructure is taking place. The outcome of this struggle belongs to the future. But this is the only historically known method of man's struggle against himself in order to develop himself.

It is with the objective of exploring the nature of collectivist accumulation consonant with the development of man that we now proceed to spell out the philosophical moorings of a society inspired by such humanism.

DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

Development defined

Our view of development is a process by which one's overall personality is enhanced. This is so for society as well as for an individual. For society the identity is collective. Thus development for society means development of the collective personality of society.

The collective is an association of individuals who interact mutually and collectively with each other with specified rules, and to which jurisdiction is consciously surrendered. Personality stands for a distinct identity, self-confidence, creative ability, an ability to face the world with poise, purpose and pride.

Development of collective personality requires physical (material, economic) development but it is above all the development and application of consciousness and faculties. A child may grow physically while his personality does not develop. So it is with society. Thus "economic development", while it is vitally necessary, cannot be treated as an independent question divorced from its social bearings. Development of a society is social development, a process in which "economic" and "non-economical" elements interact organically with each other. Attempt at isolating the "economic" elements and fit them into any hypothetical model of "economic development" is therefore unscientific.

Development thus defined is a multi-variate quantitative and qualitative change and may not be immediately measurable cardinally. It is not necessary. Development of an individual also may not be measured cardinally: one looks at his height and weight; one also looks at his overall personality, and judges his development from one's own vantage point. By making the underlying value judgement explicit communication is made possible. Weights are sometimes used to compare attributes by concensus among evaluators for limited purposes (e.g., for admission into school); such weights seldom enjoy universality, and judgement ultimately remains subjective. So it is with social development. It will be futile to attempt to measure any country's social development quantitatively and expect consensus about this: the world's richest society may be considered to be its sickest and hence not developed at all; such positions can be understood but cannot be refuted, and yet scientific judgements may be given on such basis. While scientific judgements about social development require them to be reasoned, cardinal quantification has often served as a fetish that has detracted from rather than helped evaluate the more essential qualitative attributes.

The individual and the collective

The individual and the collective might be thought to have conflicting interests. Our concept of the collective rules this out. The collective exists to the extent that individuals acquiesce in its sovereignty, and develops as individuals acquire more of this collective spirit. Thus a nation of "self-seekers" may be a collective only in the sense that its members have agreed to hold a common passport; if there is no more of the "collective spirit" it would be a very weak collective indeed.

But the "collective spirit" is not an abnegation of individual interest in favour of a mystified concept of "society". We view the collective as a method of serving individual interests while at the same time raising individual consciousness so that one progressively aspires for fulfilment of higher orders including fulfilment in developing together. The individual will contribute his utmost to the collective output from which he will in turn receive goods and services that enrich him materially, culturally, emotionally; this includes material products, social services, security, a sense of belonging to a society, pride in national achievement, fulfilment in helping one's distressed neighbours, and so on. To thus serve every individual, according to principles collectively determined to which every individual is a party, is indeed the very objective of the collective.

It is easy to see that the more everybody contributes to the collective the more everybody may receive from it. By definition the distribution decided upon by the collective maximizes social (collective) welfare out of given output, and the greater the collective spirit can be generated in individuals the greater will be the social output itself available for distribution.

Thus our view of the collective is not that of an "agrarian utopia" but of a society where material production and economic growth are an integral part in the process of development of its collective personality. What this concept of collective does rule out is the pursuit of the "animal" spirit of self-interest whereby one tries to take as much from society as one can without submitting to a collective evaluation of one's share in the give and take.

The invocation to look at the collective as a means of individual self-fulfilment is not new. "Serve the people" is an age-old preaching by the great seers of mankind, although how far it has been demystified in terms of more understandable individual and social objectives could be questioned. The community spirit is manifest in many tribal societies even today with collective ownership of property as its material base (e.g., among the khasis in Meghalaya state in India and some of the islands in the Pacific); and in pre-capitalist agricultural societies in Asia and elsewhere, where despite breakdown of collective ownership a sense of community still prevails.

Aspirations frontier

Within the framework of the above philosophy development has to have its operational objectives. One of these is growth of the collective spirit mentioned above. Stimulating the spirit of cooperation is another, by means of which the collective consciousness may be promoted and the quantity of social good to be produced may be raised. Creativity and innovativeness, a problem-solving approach to life, are essential attributes of a dynamic personality and have to be cultivated. Improvement of knowledge is a basic requirement. A will to develop, and faith in the collective creative potential of man, are fundamental prerequisites with which society must be equipped.

Somewhat more complex is the question of attaining an "aspiration frontier". At any point of time individuals in a society have certain natural aspirations like having a minimum of nourishment, clothing and shelter, some leisure and opportunity for cultural-scientific pursuits. For many Asian societies this may have to be set as a long-run objective beyond the material possibilities in the short run. This will leave a problem of sustaining morale in the short run to be solved. The solution lies in the direction of creating values that give a sense of fulfilment in the very austerity that will be necessary in the short run; such fulfilment is possible only if such austerity is shared in a framework of collective effort for progress.

Self-reliance

Of all the new values to be created self-reliance is the single most important. Asia has depended too long on external masters. Rural Asia has depended too long on the city. The rural poor have been subservient too long on the rural rich and on the "officer" sent from the city, a subservience that has not been voluntary but has been forced on them; in the process their own initiative and vitality have been sapped. The result is a history of exploitation of the "dependent" by the "master". The dependent, appearing to have no self-respect, commands no respect from others. He is laughed at by the world and despised at the same time that he is squeezed.

Asia cannot develop unless it rejects the soft option and resolves to be self-reliant. Self-reliance is a quality and not a quantity. It means building up of a combination of material and mental reserves that enable one to choose one's own course of evolution uninhibited by what others desire. It requires maximum mobilization of domestic resources for poor societies, but above all it requires psychological and institutional staying power to meet crisis situations when the supply of essential materials is too short. This staying power is best attained collectively: individually a hungry man feels isolated and his mental reserve wanes; collectively this reserve is reinforced for each, and collective resolve gives individuals strength to fight a calamity with heads high.

Self-reliance does not necessarily mean self-sufficiency. With psychological staying power a self-reliant society can open up and negotiate from a position of strength. But some measure of self-sufficiency in strategic areas more easily prone to manipulation by exploitative interests is desirable. Such vulnerable areas are staple food production, technology and spare parts, and military resistance power.

All these make the development of appropriate technology indispensable. While development of a modern sector is imperative the technological revolution has to be primarily internally achieved. It may have been genuinely hoped that the developing countries of Asia would not have to start from scratch; they could borrow from the technology shelf of the West. But history has shown that import substitution of technology is virtually impossible; unequal exchange in international trade, restrictive clauses of transfer, and inappropriateness of the highly capital and skill-intensive western technology militate against the possibility of Asia's achieving technological independence via an outward-looking strategy. Technological revolution has to be internally achieved also because of its social implications. The masses of the people must not be alienated by a transplantation of elitist technology not rooted in their lives. Technological development has to be based on local resources, people's own initiative and felt needs; it has to be efficiently labour-intensive so as to ensure optimum use of available local resources of which labour is the most abundant.

Participatory democracy

The collective as we conceive it functions through active participation of the people. Without this the individual would not belong organically to the collective and the collective itself would not to that extent be a reality. The collective and participatory democracy are hence inseparable concepts. Participatory democracy is not formal voting into power of the leaders once in five years and passive obedience in between; it is not merely government "of the people and for the people" but also and more fundamentally, "by the people". Participatory democracy rules out dominance of any minority group over the broad masses of people. In the Asian context it precludes, therefore, dictatorship of the "elite" over the masses, of the city over the countryside, of the modern sector over the traditional, or new forms of external control which would dilute the process of democracy. There is also no room in this participatory system for power wielding, though intelligent, leadership, which is alien to the broad masses of the people and tends to strengthen its own position at the expense of the latter, nor for the unaccountable and unresponsive bureaucrat who considers it beneath him to have an interaction with the masses.

Participatory democracy can be more fully practised the lower one goes in the organizational hierarchy of society and must be so practised. At higher levels (e.g., regional, national), some system of representation becomes inevitable, and the problem arises of making the representatives remain true to the consciousness and aspirations of their respective constituencies and be truly accountable to them. The objective here is to devise a mechanism that lives up to this requirement.

Consciousness gap

The problem of a "consciousness gap" between leaders of a society and the masses of the people remains. In concrete historical conditions in any society some persons may be ahead of others in perceptions of the need for social change, in their ability to systematize ideas whose origins are in the masses themselves, in seeing through complex relationships and in relevant technical expertise. Such men are natural leaders of society, whom the masses of the people tend to follow even without coercion. Participatory democracy in such situations would not yet be complete, nor would the leaders be fully accountable to the people in a real sense. Such a relationship may be formally "democratic", but at the depth of the situation lies the seed of leadership ego which may grow, and gradually make the leader alienated from his people when finally he leads the people to a vision that is more his than of the people. This would in turn alienate the people, whose collective personality would to that extent fail to grow. The leadership and the masses must therefore move in a mutually interacting process that systematically reduces the consciousness gap. Democracy in this sense is not a system to be implanted but an objective to be realized through a process.

De-alienation

Much of the above objectives imply a regeneration of values that man has had in his grain but has lost or nearly lost through ages of subordination to exploitation, mal-administration and misdirection. Regressive social relations and cultural taboos have paved the way for such alienation from man's original and inherent potentials. The binding constraint to development in Asia as we conceive it is not a shortage of physical resources but factors that inhibit the fullest expression of man's natural self: identity with work in which he should find pleasure and fulfilment; and with society in which alone he discovers his self, an identity that has been fragmented into elites and the masses, the ruler and the ruled, the privileged and the underprivileged, the "superior" and the "inferior". Development then must mean a process of de-alienation, i.e., liberation from all inhibitions derived from the structure and superstructure of society that thus dehumanize its broad masses and prevent them from consummating their full potentials.

Conclusion

In essence, the development philosophy and objectives we have enunciated centre around five core concepts which stand inseparably together:

1. Man as the end of development - which is therefore to be judged by what it does to him;
2. De-alienation of man in the sense that he feels at home with the process of development in which he becomes the subject and the object;
3. Development of collective personality of man in which he finds his richest expression;
4. Participation as the true form of democracy; and
5. Self-reliance as the expression of man's faith in his own abilities.

For the Asia that we are reviewing, the rural society accounts for about eighty percent of the total society. Rural development in Asia is therefore the key to its overall social development. The personality of Asian nations cannot be raised without raising the personality of rural Asia. This leads us to a strategy of development which points to the countryside as the centre of activity for contemporary Asia. The inner-directed strategy that we are seeking encompasses the city but the focus and the driving spirit is the village where the new Asian Drama will inevitably have to be played.

Our methodology for developing the strategy is empirical. We first see, in Part II, what is on the ground in a few selected Asian countries that seem to give us the range of options, examine them in the light of our development philosophy and objectives, and seek to understand why and how rural development occurs or fails to occur. The lessons we learn are knit into a strategy of rural development in Part III.

COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

Chapter 2

INDIA

The mood of 1947

Architects of Indian independence were reputed to be men of vision and compassion. For thirty years prior to independence, in prison and out, they had dreamt of a new India, united with its pre-colonial past and moving towards its "manifest destiny". Having evolved a programme of social change over a fifty year period, they promised to reform the Indian society: untouchability was to be abolished; evils of caste to be eradicated; illiteracy and want to be banished; complete equality was to prevail; exploitation was unthinkable; the human potential was to be liberated and nurtured.

In this task they believed they had the support of the masses. Though most of them came from a middle class background, some genuinely expected to establish a "state of the whole people". They believed they had reason for the confidence; they were not just politicians but authentic folk heroes. They had not sought power, and in that sense, not only had the consent of the governed, but had "consented to govern". It is not surprising then that they fully expected to channel the energies of the masses from the goal of freedom struggle to the task of all round development.

Ghandhi had succeeded in making village India the focus of attention of the congress, and long before independence gave the vision of a "wantless" community sometimes described as a co-operative commonwealth which would be not only self-reliant but also self-sufficient. With his faith in people he expected this "commune" to be established spontaneously and voluntarily once the foreign rule was removed. The congress, which he wished dissolved as a political party immediately after attaining independence, was to provide the enlightened and self-less cadres for this constructive work, pursuading the privileged to share with the deprived. Three thousand years of Indian history was to be selectively obliterated.

Community development, co-operatives and Panchayats - the hope of the 50's

This was the background against which the nation launched its first major programme of Rural Development. The Community Development Programme was a comprehensive self-help movement embracing education, health, drinking water, roads, agricultural production and cottage industries. It was conceived as a peoples' programmes, mobilizing their energies, resources and labour, for the general social upliftment of all. The role of the state was to be catalytic, providing technical support, some material and, when absolutely necessary financial assistance. Priorities and needs were to be determined by the participants and the existence of a spirit of co-operation and traditional informal concensus mechanism was assumed. There was a firm belief that this effort to change attitudes and institutions would generate enough growth to solve the basic problems of want and ignorance in a decade or so, converting underutilized manpower into capital and goods.

To the national leadership it came as a shock and perhaps as a betrayal, when the expected response failed to materialize. The isolation of the leaders and the alienation of the masses had already begun. While the leaders thought of the programme as a national effort directed at the poorest sections, the masses in turn saw no evidence of it in their daily personal and community lives: neither their social condition nor their economic strength had changed and their immediate "government", the local elites and exploiters, were neither touched in their conscience nor in their power and asset base. The concept of an Indian National State remained for them as remote and abstract as ever.

In its own terms the refusal of the congress to liquidate itself deprived the nation of a dedicated, independent, self-disciplined cadre, forcing it to reply on a bureaucracy whose authoritarian, elitist traditions were antithetical to the needs of a mass based utopian movement. The bureaucracy served further to alienate the masses, particularly by their overt alignment with the rural elites, with whom after all they shared common attitudes and concerns. Social legislation, however radical or innocuous, had no chance of being implemented through the existing machinery.

The second failure was serious, and in view of the explicit commitments made prior to independence, the more unpardonable. Close as they were to the rural masses, the leaders were fully aware of the iniquitous agrarian structure and had promised to remedy it, either by radical redistribution of assets or by "voluntary" co-operativization. They fully understood that such restructuring of society was a precondition for massive involvement even from a purely non-economic, psychological point of view. No other act or pronouncement could have better signalled the dawn of a new era to the populace - both the beneficiaries and the losers - and created a climate in which spontaneous development efforts would have been born.

It is not difficult to either rationalize or to assign motives for these two acts of commission and omission, but the fact remains that they spelt the doom of a noble though utopian idea. Having missed the historical moment for decisive action, the leadership has kept devising new policies and organizational designs aimed at bypassing the basic structural barriers rather than removing them once and for all. With each wrong or ineffective step the task has been rendered more difficult, pursuading even the stronger proponents of "social justice" to become "pragmatic" and accept the reality.

It was not out of ignorance of the true state of affairs that the programme failed. The lack of mass participation (which was the basis of the strategy), excessive bureaucratization and unequal distribution of benefits were clearly recognized as the proximate causes of the failure. The response was to create local elected structures - Panchayats - to decentralize democratic institutions in an effort to move decision centres closer to the people, encourage their real involvement and to put the bureaucracy under popular control. This would have been a sound policy, had it come earlier, and had it been accompanied by an agrarian revolution. By the time the Panchayats were introduced at the end of the decade, the vested interests had further consolidated their position and captured the new institutions as well, giving de jure sanction to their unofficial influence.

Another interesting pronouncement was the Congress Party resolution in 1959 which declared that "the future agrarian pattern should be that of co-operative joint farming in which the land shall be pooled for joint cultivation". For a party which by then had been captured by the rural vested interests such a policy declaration could mean either a deflection from the main issue of radical asset redistribution or more cynically, a new confidence of the elite in their strength, which could live with any resolution without any danger of its implementation. In practice nothing happened except the further strengthening of the service co-operatives, which acted as conduits to channel resources to the larger farmers.

By the end of the decade, with the problems of food shortage mounting, and the idealistic dream fading, the country was ready for other and simpler solutions. These were not long in coming. The failure of the community development programme was attributed to its diffused character as it did not put sufficient emphasis on agricultural production which was considered to be a technical matter. It was thought that if production increased other changes would follow.

Intensive agricultural development programme - the strategy of the 60's

Rarely could a document find a more favourable moment for its appearance than the Report on India's Food Crisis and Steps to meet it,[1] produced in 1959. Its merit was its simplicity, dealing in understandable inputs (fertilizers, water, credit, extension services) and quantifiable outputs (tons of food grains) through technically sound relationships. To a country weary of "intangibles" like spirit of co-operation, involvement of the masses and the quality of life, it was a welcome change to hard facts.

At one stroke, the problem of rural development, which was a comprehensive concept based on people, was transformed to a project for agricultural production, taking on a purely technological and managerial character. It was assumed that once production was assured, wherever it was most economical and by whoever was most efficient, distribution could always be managed to ensure equity and "social justice". The strategy rationalized and legitimized the withdrawal of the overextended state machinery from areas which were difficult, from people who were non-responsive and from spheres which were intractable, to the comfortable sanctuary of well-endowed areas, "progressive" farmers and technical questions. The retreat was thought to be as an advance. If there were some uncomfortable questions of regional disparities, social disequilibria, and the rise of an elitist cult, they were answered by maintaining that development was the "art of the possible".

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[1] Agricultural Production Team, Report on India's Food Crisis and Steps to meet it, Government of India, 1959.

The new approach became the basis of public policy and planning. Any remaining doubts were dispelled by two temporally overlapping and mutually reinforcing events: the severe draughts in 1966-67 and the momentous discovery of the high yielding varieties. The near famine provided the seriousness and HYV the means for the "New Agricultural Strategy" as it come to be known. The spectacular achievements were seen to prove the correctness of the approach and the success of the Green Revolution was claimed. As new varieties had been produced for all the major cereals, and the technology was certified to be size-neutral, it was thought to be potentially a factor in reducing regional and vertical disparities.

It soon became apparent however that the facts were otherwise. The revolution was confined to particular areas, crops and mainly to larger farmers who could mobilize the resources necessary for the purchase-input-intensive technology. Had the output increase kept up the initial momentum however, these issues might have been ignored. It was the unexpected stagnation in the 70's which reopened the entire question, initially as a technical debate, which soon broadened to include issues of equity, poverty and politics.

Growth or "social justice" - the debate of the 70's

The split in the Congress Party in 1969 radicalized the tone of Indian politics. It facilitated a re-examination of many past policies. Policies on Rural Development were no exception. Distortions introduced during the past decade were officially acknowledged and "corrective" actions initiated. While production was still unsatisfactory, distribution was not to wait any longer. The trickle down theory was abandoned.

The new programme included establishment of specialized agencies to identify and subsidize small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers, massive comprehensive programme for the development of draught-prone areas, tribal areas and a Minimum Needs Programme to directly ensure a minimum quality of life to the rural poor. Finally, the government committed itself to launching a new type of multipurpose institution in the rural area - a co-operative "Farmers' Service Society" - which would be controlled by the small farmers.

The debate on choice between growth and social justice has only begun. It has been sharpened by the deteriorating resource position. The Indian polity has been unable to offer a viable framework within which the two are complementary and not competitive.

Some "success stories" and their lessons

Over the twenty-five year period, there were some "successful" attempts. While the broad causes of overall policy failures have been generally identified, the success of some of the attempts have lessons in terms of second and third order details, which must be kept in mind in launching any future programme. This applies both to what should be done and what should be avoided. In that sense, "success" in some of the cases discussed here, while demonstrating the mechanism for growth, also illustrates the working of an undesirable social process.

Wheat in Punjab

In the decade of the 60's, wheat yield in Punjab increased by 80 percent, production by 200 percent, and market arrivals by over 300 percent. The state agricultural income and the per capita income trebled at current prices and soared 70 percent above the national average. Optimism in Delhi, which is close to Punjab, was not ill-founded if, superficially, Punjab appeared to be the shape of India of tomorrow.

Apart from the well known technical, institutional and skill advantages which the state enjoys, the success of Punjab can best be understood if it is viewed as "Punjab Incorporated", analogous to "Japan Inc.". Here an agricultural state, controlled by large and influencial farmers, set out seriously to organize itself single mindedly to bring prosperity to the "company" - and through it to its shareholders. The entire machinery of the state, from law and order to road building, were geared to this single purpose and no excuses for lapses were tolerated. Even corruption was functional: it steered allocation of scarce resources, e.g., fertilizers, to the highest bidder, who was forced to make the most efficient use of it.

More specifically:

1. The state bargained with the central government from a position of strength to obtain the maximum allocation of inputs and maximum price for its grain "exports";

2. Streamlined canal irrigation system and encouraged private tube-well construction;

3. Electrified every village in the state and constructed roads which brought every village to within one-mile distance of an all-weather road;

4. Supported the organization of a first rate agricultural university which did relevant research and produced trained manpower;

5. Organized an efficient and sufficient extension service, manned by young technically competent workers who responded to the farmers need because they knew that the state was serious about performance;

6. Quickened the cycle of research, multiplication and distribution of high yielding seeds;

7. Organized an efficient system for the distribution of fertilizers pesticides, credit and farm machinery;

8. Covered the state with regulated market yards and a powerful state purchase machinery (Marketing Federation) which dominated the transactions;

9. Streamlined the administration to provide a single line of command; and finally,

10. Maintained law and order, which could have posed a problem due to obviously increasing disparities.

It has not been possible to reproduce the Punjab model elsewhere in India, except in some neighbouring areas.

Few parts of Asia have experienced the green revolution with the intensity of Punjab, which therefore represents the best example of what a technologically fueled growth model can do when superimposed on a society based on inequality. Benefitting by the early adoption of the new technology, the larger farmers have started an expansion process (inspite of the land ceilings) which is driving the poorer farmers to the landless category and increasing the degree of polarization of the society. The process is likely to continue and increase social tensions.

Punjab illustrates that growth is not synonymous with development.

Milk in Gujarat

In the general refrain of the rich getting richer in the managerially successful examples of Indian agricultural development, the growth of the dairy industry in Gujarat is a freak and therefore deserves careful analysis: it has mainly benefitted small and medium farmers and even those with little or no land.

The Anand Milk Union Limited (AMUL) was born in 1946 as a protest against private milk traders who were ruthlessly exploiting the producers. Starting with a few hundred litres of milk collected from 8 societies, AMUL (operating mainly in one district) has grown into an agro-processing co-operative giant which collects 600,000 litres of milk per day from 240,000 members, organized in 840 village societies. The total annual turnover is around Rs. 400 million. The entire plant, worth over Rs. 50 million, is owned by the members and has been mainly built-up over the years from operating surpluses. The value added to the economy of the district has been estimated to be now over a Rs. 120 million per year, averaging Rs. 500 per member. Thirty-seven percent of the producers, accounting for 23 percent of the milk are under 5 acres in size, while fully 87 percent, accounting for 85 percent of the milk hold under 10 acres. The benefits are clearly accruing to the small farmers.

In addition to providing an efficient collective mechanism for marketing milk, AMUL has taken various measures to boost the production of milk in the district. An artificial insemination service, a veterinary servive, supply of high quality concentrates and fodder development programmes are some of the measures which have been made possible by co-operative action, at a very modest cost. AMUL employs 300 professionals in the Animal Husbandry section alone and has further trained local boys for simpler functions in each village society. Education of the extension staff and the farmers is a constant activity of the Union as a long-term investment in people.

AMUL publishes a monthly vernacular newsletter which is supplied to every member. It arranges group visits by women (who usually look after the animals) to the processing plant and uses the opportunity to acquaint them with family planning methods.

Through the National Dairy Development Board, "AMULS" are being replicated successfully in different parts of the country, bringing to millions of small and marginal farmers a meaningful and remunerative new activity which primarily translates their labour into value. As 60 percent of the milk produced in the country is produced by small farmers, they will be the major beneficiaries of the programme.

In contrast to other choices of activities, AMUL shows that choosing an activity like milk production, which is labour intensive and gives a comparative advantage to the small farmers, can serve as a direct conduit to the development of the target group.

Specific ingredients in the success of AMUL appear to be as follows:

1. Honest, dedicated and motivated social workers of the Gandhian tradition are organizers and constitute the policy level Board. Society Bye-laws have been carefully designed to discourage vested interests and vigilance is constantly maintained;
2. Professional management and competent technicians work without interferences;
3. Non-bureaucratic cadres (including local links) are responsive and accountable to the members;

4. Cost conscious efficient management with continuous concurrent audit and guidance from the Union keep the entire structure free of corruption and scandal;

5. Quality control and pricing of milk are open, fair and fool-proof with no favouritism possible;

6. Procedures for decision making are democratic and so are methods of promoting innovation;

7. Sound working relations have been established with other development agencies in the area;

8. Most importantly (and the organizers lay great stress on this point) AMUL is a homogeneous organization with a single objective.

Questions have indeed been raised why an organization with such enormous strength has not branched out into a more comprehensive effort at total development. It is maintained that it is precisely because AMUL concentrates on a non-controversial item like milk production that it has been able to transcend caste, class, faction and political schisms within the village.

AMUL's strength is its weakness; the sponsors are wise to recognize it and to operate within the self-imposed boundries.

AMUL is the best example of the positive force in Gandhian values. It inspired a group of sincere-social workers to undertake the arduous task of organizing the poor against an exploitative system. That they succeeded at all, inspite of the continuation of the iniquitous social structure, is a tribute to their dedication, skills and shrewdness. Inspite of the deliberately limited scope of its operations, the creation of a cadre and the multiplication of the pattern elsewhere in India has valuable lessons.

AMUL also shows the limitations of even a well conceived and well managed programme which seeks to benefit the poor without touching the rich. If the programme is too successful it will eventually lead to a confrontation whose outcome is uncertain.

The Santhal Movement

At the other end of the spectrum is the Santhal movement which has started with confrontation and moved into all round development. We reproduce below the story of this recent phenomenon.[1/]

"Material Base of Santhal Movement

REPORTS of a Santhal separatist movement in Bihar appear now and then and it is said that while the demand for a separate Jharkhand of the Santhals is an old one, what distinguishes the present movement is the violence that underpins it. The violence is said to have been brought into the movement by the new leadership, prominent among whom is Shibu Soren.

Against the background of the several small, isolated groups of activists in the countryside, who are trying to move populations in rural pockets into action against the established inequitous order of things, the Santhal movement stands out for two reasons. Unlike the other groups which are led by young middle-class men who have entered the fray out of certain convictions, the Santhal movement is a movement of the Santhals under Santhal leadership. Secondly, apart from its various political and educational activities, it has something of a programme for agricultural improvement.

How does the movement function? What are its aims and what do its leaders do to achieve them? Shibu Soren is one of the leaders of the Jharkhand Mukti Andolan which, together with the Jharkhand Party, wants a tribal state separate from Bihar, within India. Another colleague of Soren, Vinod Bihari Mahato, himself not a Santhal but a Mahato (a farmer community in South Bihar), is in jail under MISA. Shibu himself is 32 years old. He is energetic, but scornful of theorists who he thinks rarely relate to local conditions and problems. Shibu is not even a matriculate. He had to give up school because, according to him, the Mahajans murdered his father, so that he then had to work and look after his younger brothers. He got married, and managed to get a contract for felling trees. Some five years ago, he joined the movement. Shibu has no regard for political parties: "I don't want to have anything to do with politics", was a repeated remark by him in the course of our conversation. "All we want is to live like human beings".

However, the key aspect of the programme espoused by this Utopian approach is still food. "We must eat all the year round. So far, the Santhal (or Majhi) has worked for twelve months, and starved for twelve months, and the money-lender has reaped the harvest. This must change". Thus the movement is by no means postponing its economic programme till its political demand for Jharkhand might be granted. Thus the political education of the Santhals is actually being sought also through a production programme. "Our

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[1/] Reproduced from the article "Material Base of Santhal Movement", Economic and Political Weekly Vol. X No.11, 464-465, 1975. The permission for reproduction is gratefully acknowledged.

people are illiterate and ignorant. They cannot see beyond their noses. All these leaders from the cities talk to them about "economic progress", when they do not know the concept through their own experience. They have never learnt to plan, not even the next crop. All this has to be changed, and we are doing it right now by undertaking several programmes."

Thus, in Tundi Tehsil, in the tribal belts of Giridih-Hazaribagh, the Santhal Parganas, the tribesmen have taken over land which was in the possession of moneylenders. The moneylenders (called Mahajans) may keep their land if they cultivate it themselves (I saw one graduate ex-money lender ploughing his field) and put their own hand to the plough. The land reclaimed from moneylenders has been distributed among the landless Santhals. I was told that in Tundi, at least, no one is a landless labourer. This land is cultivated by what Shibu calls samuhikheti. What does this mean in practice? All the implement, bullocks and manpower in the village is deployed en masse, when the agricultural season sets in. If a particular field needs three oxen teams, and the owner has only one, his neighbours lend a hand a when his field is ploughed, he takes his team to help out the others, and the work of preparing the land which may otherwise take a month, is completed in a week. All agricultural operations are done by this method. While the ownership is still individual, labour is being pooled into a team. Last year, for the first time, paddy was grown co-operatively. Paddy used to be the sole crop. This winter, I saw wheat in several fields, forming a long belt; in fact, wherever water was available for irrigation the Santhals have planted wheat, a crop which has never been grown in this area before. Indeed, a winter crop itself was unheard of. For the first time people thus had grain in their houses long after the harvest had been gathered in. Soren said that the Santhal was just learning in some areas to put by seed for the next season. They would eat up their meagre crop and the following year borrow seed from the moneylenders at usurious rates.

So the organisation had started what he calls a grain "gola". The grain gola comprises contributions on five accounts. As soon as the harvest is in, every farmer is required to deposit in this store-house twice the quantity of seed he uses. Part of this is to pay for the labour he has taken from his neighbours, just as they must pay for his. The leadership is confident that this will enable the Santhal to escape from the clutches of moneylenders. Moreover, in the areas controlled by the Jharkhand separatists - certainly in Tundi - the farmers are strictly forbidden to sell their grain to the city merchants. This helps to ensure that there is food in every house. The seed deposit is one of the five "accounts" which every household (i.e., every unit which cooks for itself) must maintain in the grain house. Another account is the contribution to the night schools. Every parent with children between the ages of 4 and 15 years must contribute 10 kgs of paddy per year per child to the grain gola. Every village will have its teacher who is to be paid in paddy. A teacher can be a boy with high school education. He need teach the children the three R's. These are night schools and are called "akil akhada". ("Akil" is brain and "Akhada" is the wrestler's ring where the trainee wrestles.) During the day, the master may go about his own business. The leadership is emphatic about the importance of education: without it nothing is possible; even prohibition, imposed and enforced by the leadership in these villages today, will have a lasting effect only if people are educated and understand the need for it. The other two accounts are: political activities and visitors. To support the Jharkhand Mukti Andolan each household must contribute 10 kg of paddy and Rs 3 per year. As for visitors, an annual contribution of one rupee and 1 kg of paddy per year per household is envisaged.

I was taken to see one grain gola, where rice was stored in containers made of twisted ropes from paddy stems. The accounts were kept in ledgers. In another village the man in charge of the storehouse had gone to a meeting, and at a third Shibu had to remonstrate with the local workers because they had failed to establish the grain gola. I also saw an Akil Akhada. The schoolmaster was a young boy, who had studied upto the prematriculation class and then given up because of financial troubles. Shibu called him "Master Saheb".

I also attended the camp court or "baishi". It is really an assembly of about 20 villagers. Among other things, the assembly hears quarrels and disputes. The Majhis, I was given to understand, do not go to regular courts any longer, preferring the cheaper and speedier justice meted out by the "baishi". From independent sources, I heard that the courts in Giridih were practically deserted. The "baishi" I attended was devoted to explaining the necessity for grain golas, and in telling the villagers to come to a meeting the next day.

When I went to see Shibu he was preparing to set off the next day for a public meeting; his companions were just as busy, organising things for a mamoth meeting - expecting a crowd of 10 lakhs (one million).

Where does violence fit into their scheme, I persevered. Shibu and others tell you that they do not like violence, but if it is used against them, they will and do retaliate. Bows and arrows, and axes, are their traditional weapons, carried quite matter-of-factly. Recently, two Santhals were attacked by the Mahajans (moneylenders), their motor-cycle was burnt and the men were left for dead. They were alive. The Santhal drums began to beat, a huge crowd gathered on the spot and the Santhals retaliated with fury.

Shibu stresses that Santhals have confiscated the land, animals and grain belonging to the Mahajans, and the Mahajans driven out. But it was not because they were "outsiders" or nontribals. There are the rare Marwaris among the Majhis: I found several non-Majhis including a Bhumihar. There was one Marwari who, the Majhis had complained, had Majhi land in his possession. On investigation, the leadership had found this to be true but had also found that the Marwari tilled the land himself.

Said Shibu Soren: "This business of taking land from one man and giving it to another because of their caste differences is sheer folly .... What is the other man to do? I told the Majhis that no one was to touch the Marwari's land. What a man tills himself, he has a right to keep. It is the Mahajans (moneylenders) we will not tolerate."

Under a recent legislation, Adivasi lands bought by non-Adivasis, without the Collector's consent, are being restored to Adivasis. The Santhals have taken the law one step further. They are reclaiming lands owned by Mahajans, whether or not the transfers had been legal, and they are not going to the law courts either.

For the moment, at any rate, the Bihar government is keeping quiet. It is reportedly taking an "indulgent view" of the activities of the Santhals. It is not yet clear when the more fundamental ideas unleashed or planted by the Santhal movement of today will spark repression by the ruling classes."

Chapter 3

BANGLADESH

First independence

As in India, in Bangladesh also (then East Pakistan) 1947 did not signal any substantial change in its rural socio-economic scene. No serious official effort at rural development was launched. Ayud Khan's basic democracies were primarily a political instrument to ensure control of the countryside, and put the regime's rural agents absolutely on top. The economic programme entrusted to the basic democracies such as the Works Programme provided some periodic employment but no basic structural change for sustained development.

The Commila experiment

Somewhat independently, with official cover, material and personnel support but with a considerable degree of functional autonomy Akhter Hameed Khan's Comilla experiment emerged gradually as an outstanding effort at building an institutional infrastructure for sustained agricultural growth in rural areas. The Comilla area moved towards the "Green Revolution" as a result. A lot of social stimulation was generated, skills were developed, and a lot of people interacted socially in the co-operatives and in the Thana training centres. But the motivation this experiment addressed itself to was primarily that of individual gain and not of social development of which individual gain could be a part. This turned the institutions essentially into forums for competition rather than cooperation although cooperation was the slogan and "cooperatives" were the vehicle to prosperity. Thus the villagers competed, in the institutions provided by the Comilla experiment, for scarce material inputs, credit, extension service, training, marketing and managerial power, and for personal channels to managerial and administrative powers. Being a competition between unequals, the inevitable happened, and the distribution of net benefits of the Project tended, after an initial period of learning the rules of the game, to become more and more skewed. As brought out in one recent study,[1]

> "A study of 32 managers of village co-operatives, ... shows that 17 of them held more than 5 acres of land, another 8 held between 3 and 5 acres, while only 7 held between 1 and 3 acres of land (none held less than one acre or more than 9 acres). The average size of their holdings in Comilla Thana is 1.86 acres .... In a study of four successive managing committees of the ACF, it was found that, of 12 elected members in each committee, the number having farming as their only occupation fell gradually. It was 8 in the first committee, 5 in the second committee, 3 in the third committee and 2 in the fourth. Those who were farmers as well as contractors, on the other hand had no representation in the first committee, but they were in simple (though not absolute) majority in the last committee, with 5 members . ... It should be mentioned that contracting is a full-time job, and if these people were farmers they must have been very casual ones."
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> "It was also found that managing committee members were getting an inordinate share of total loans. Of 30 members who responded to a questionnaire, 11 were managing committee members, and they consumed 65 percent of all loans issued to these 30 ... 67 percent of the overdue loans were defaulted by Directors of managing committees."

Akhtar Hameed Khan himself reports on the problem of wilful default thus: [2]

> "The problem of wilful and mischievous defaulters is specially alarming. Historically the old co-operative system was captured by influential people and they castrated it by wilful default. The same sort of people want to perform the same operation on the new cooperative system. They are powerful and well informed. They know that the old sanctions (certificates, notices, pressure by officers) are now dead, and they can repudiate their obligation with impunity. If the new co-operatives are to be saved from mischievous defaulters, the other members, the majority of small farmers, for whom co-operative credit is the only means of escape from the clutches of the money lender traders, must create new sanctions. They must learn to control the disruptors by developing a new set of rules of "bichar" and "shasti", a kind of "members court".

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[1] Abu Abdullah, Land Reform and Agrarian Change in Bangladesh, Bangladesh Institute of Development Economics, Dacca, Nov.'73 , p.58.

[2] Akhtar Hameed Khan, Tour of Twenty Thanas, Impressions of Drainage-roads, Irrigation and Co-operative Programmes, Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, Comilla, Feb. 1971, p.15.

The Project as a whole was designed to serve a "middle" range of farmers rather than the relatively richer, who knew how to take care of their interests; or the poorer, who possessed little or no land, was not credit-worthy, and needed non-land-based programme that would have gone beyond the central thrust of the Project. This tilted the power-balance in the area towards the leaders of this middle strata and away from the traditional richer gentries, a phenomenon that is common to such institutional developments. But there was no institutional device specifically designed to ensure that the masses of the middle strata shared this new power effectively; the latter could not therefore be expected to receive anywhere near equal privileges from these institutions, and, as brought out above, they did not.

A "soft programme" that it was with most of the inputs and services heavily subsidized, the Comilla Project represented a net inflow of resources into the project area directly; the indirect effect on resource flows into and out of the region via rise in agricultural production, release of surplus or direct use of Project credit in off-Project business, etc. remains a question for a careful study. But the direct impact of the Project on attitudes was not conducive to the growth of any self-help consciousness in the Project area, and would have made experiments with harder programmes in other areas difficult.

Finally, one of the "area problems" summarized for the Bangladesh/FAO/UNDP Workshop on Comilla held in April 1974 was as follows [1]:-

> "As a result of introduction of modern technology the productivity of land has risen and farming has become profitable. Therefore, land owners have become interested in tilling their land themselves or by hiring labourers instead of giving land to share cropper. Share-cropping is thus declining. As a result, share-croppers are now becoming landless labourers, subsistence farmers are also becoming labourers and less viable."

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[1] Bangladesh/FAO/UNDP Workshop on Problems of small and marginal farmers and landless labourers, Area Workshop Comilla, A Summary of Problems, p.1.

Second independence

At the same time that the Comilla project was developing, the East-West-Pakistan contradiction was unfolding and Bangali nationalism was being born. A movement - political, literary and cultural - for a decade and a half culminated in epic mass arousal and confrontation that climaxed into the "war of liberation" in 1971. This threw altogether new forces in the scene.

The method of resistance by the Bangalees during the "war of liberation" was spontaneous, original and innovative out of sheer necessity. It represented a break-away from centuries of administrative, social and cultural norms. Masses were mobilized, and often mobilized themselves, to do things no one had ever thought could be done, and these were acts not merely military but also economic. Thousands of people had built roads and bridges together by voluntary labour for a common social cause; thousands had eaten together from the same hearth, had shared and used personal belongings and property as if they were communal property; had suffered and worked together in difficult environments without privileges and hierarchical or elitist divisions; had innovated individually and socially; and had set up institutions of mass initiative, administrations, vigilance and accountability. Even where elite classes stayed in command such leadership themselves had exercised methods of mobilization and administration that were of a highly innovative character, and had interacted with the masses in non-traditional ways. This was an entirely new experience, and released many of those involved from deep-rooted prejudices and inhibitions that had held them back from creative feats and collective endurance that they now experienced were possible.

Those who were thus involved in the resistance acquired a new manhood which had great constructive possibilities. Having experienced these possibilities themselves they had their aspirations also raised, with a greater social content therein than before.

Unfortunately, these experiences were not shared by everybody, and for many others they were not sustained as long as was necessary for revolutionizing values and institutions. These were in other words too short in space and time to become the dominant force after independence. The balance of post-independence political power remained with those relatively untouched by the liberating experiences.

The new government leaned heavily on the administrative apparatus that was inherited from the past rather than attempting the more difficult task of building on the innovative experiences during the resistance, and the political methods and machinery of the government also remained traditional in character. Specifically, the effective class-interest of the government remained that of the landed gentry against the substantial interest of whom no state policy would be taken, and who remained the principal link between the centre and the countryside. The rural masses were thus thrown back into the grip of their former exploiters as a class who by virtue of their newly sanctified positions were now more powerful than ever before. Obviously, nothing much could be expected from them by way of serious mass mobilization for developing rural Bangladesh.

While high aspirations were being voiced all around, official policy remained restricted to performing formalities like extending the "Integrated Rural Development Programme", designed in principle to duplicate Comilla, to new areas and allocating resources and personalities for rural development. The condition on the ground remained structurally the same as before independence while the exploiters in the countryside with their new power went all out to consolidate their material positions. The resulting racketeering amidst severe post-war shortages brought the masses of the rural poor near the limits of survival; the famine of 1974 pushed the weakest of them over the brink. In the process, economic polarization in the countryside accelerated steeply.

Development impulses

While the overall rural scene has considerably worsened since liberation, the impulses of development generated during the independence struggle have not totally died out. People from different walks of life - administrators, students and intelligentsia, specialists and politicians, besieged by aspirations towards building a new society and inspired by the experience of the independence struggle, have tried in their own individual and limited capacities to mobilize and move people forward. The methods they have used and are using have no parallel in pre-independence days, and are rooted in the experience of the independence struggle instead; they reflect a liberation of aspirations and the mind that have led them to identify personal fulfilment with initiative and involvement in social mobilization of a character that is more known to belong to "revolutionary" societies.

People's Health Centre

One such effort is that of a young medical specialist and his team, who operated a hospital camp near the Indo-Bangladesh border during the independence war to treat wounded Mukti-Bahini fighters, and after liberation moved his camp into Savar Thana in the Dacce district. The scope of the People's Health Centre, as it is called, was conceived as a "cooperative health programme gradually integrating itself with a rural development programme". The Project started with field clinics to treat diseases as the point of first contact with the villagers, and a para-medical training programme which enlisted students of a nearby University as its first batch of trainees. Through odds which ranged from resistance by the bureaucrats in Dacca to frequent armed robberies in their camp at Savar the Project moved on, and gained increasing confidence of the villagers by the dedication of its leaders, their competence as doctors, and their unelitist and un-bureaucratic, field-oriented style of operating. It was insisted that treatment was not to be free, and the villagers either had to pay for the services on the spot, or be members of a family health insurance scheme, the first such scheme in the country, by paying Taka two per month. This was done not only to raise some finance for the Project, but as a conscious principle that free medical treatment would contribute to a perpetuation of the traditional "relief" mentality that was a drag on the overall development of the villagers' personality and spirit of self-help. The work initially started in two unions in the Thana with some 4500 families; and in one year some 1400 families or 31 percent of the total number of families were enlisted in the insurance scheme. In two years the Project as a whole covered 205 villages in the area; and the health insurance scheme introduced in 78 of them, enlisting in all some 3308 families comprising 30 percent of the families in the villages under the scheme. The method of mobilization included mass meetings, house-to-house campaigns by the leaders and the para-medics, and persuading those families who had enlisted themselves and were benefitting from the membership, to talk to other families and try to enlist them.

The Project moved cautiously into family planning, an area considered to be highly sensitive and embedded with deep-seated prejudices. But the village women were more than half-ready, and the enlisting of young village girls as motivators and counsellers in this area proved highly productive. Latent demands for family planning services surfaced rapidly, and psychological inhibitions rapidly gave way. The problem soon was one of supply, and not of demand, constraint. Among the various innovations in this area the most noteworthy perhaps is the launching of a method of tubal ligation on women operated by female paramedics without the assistance of a doctor, performed under local anaesthesia in two hours, with a guarantee covering any possible loss due to the operation, and follow-up home visits in case of any complications.1/ Considered against the standard medical practice of seven day's hospitalization for tubal ligation to be performed only by qualified medical doctors "who really know the job", this innovation of the People's Health Centre, and the success of it, are outstanding.

The Project is moving ahead as a seemingly viable venture. The training of para-medics is now moving towards the creation of full-time, paid medical auxiliaries rather than of "volunteers" drawn from the student and other bodies who could not be counted on as stable workers in the programme.

1/ Progress Report No.5, People's Health Centre, Nayarhat, Dacca, April 1975.

In accordance with its conceived scope and also pushed by its internal functional logic the Project is today on the point of entering into the broader economic life of the villagers. Initiatives in providing gainful work for the village women such as sewing are also being taken. Efforts to form a corps of para-professional agricultural development workers with the assistance of trained agricultural graduates proved abortive as the graduates who were interviewed for a supervisory position were ignorant beyond book knowledge and were found worthless. The medical general staff of the Project themselves are now trying their hand in farming as a step towards helping the villagers reap better dividends from the soil.

"Tip Shai Chhi Chhi" (Thumb-sign fie fie)[1]

Raumari, an area in Rangpur district, was a liberated area although the independence war. A number of intelligentsia from all over the country, young field officers and other motivated Bangalees had assembled there and had dreamt and planned about rebuilding Bangladesh. A mass literacy programme had been conceived there, and after full liberation some of these youth who had assembled in Raumari did get involved in mass literacy works in several parts of North Bengal. Mass literacy centres were opened, and many young boys and girls enlisted themselves as teachers for a nominal 30 Taka a month.

On July 6, 1973 village Katchubari-Kristapur in Thakargaon Thana in Dinajpur district was declared completely free of "thumb-sign" (i.e. thumb impression as a substitute for signature), and every villager above the age of 7 years was claimed able to read and write the alphabet and simple constructions including his or her name. This was the first such village in Bangladesh, and the feat was accomplished by what had developed into a movement over the previous two months, with the following special features:

1/ Personal notes on visits and interviews by Md. Anisur Rahman.

1) a decision by the village youth, led by high-school and early college students some of whom were failures in the school, to eradicate the thumb-sign in the village by a major social thrust in addition to mobilising villagers for other community work;

2) in addition to house-to-house campaigns, small children were lined up every morning to parade through the village with slogans charging the villagers, among other things, to liberate themselves from the degrading "thumb-sign";

3) local government offices and agencies where the villagers had to go and sign for registration, credit, etc. for different purposes were persuaded by the youth of this village not to accept the thumb-impression from any resident of their village, and to insist that he or she either sign his or her name or give a nose-impression, considered traditionally as a matter of great humiliation;

4) centres were opened and run by volunteers to give crash training in the two 'r's to all villagers in the target age-group who did not know the alphabets and could not sign their full names.

The news of the first village which had totally wiped out the thumb-impression reached Dacca and the Government was persuaded to hold its two-day International Literacy Day function of September 8-9 in Thakurgaon to honour the village. This news itself stirred up youth in other villages in Thakurgaon, who raced with each other to equal the feat of Katchubari-Kristapur with more or less the same methods. Three other villages made it by September 8, and several others were close.

The International Literacy Day function was held with due pomp for two days in Thakurgaon town five to six miles from Katchubari-Kristapur. The youth of the village had repaired the road from the town by mobilizing voluntary community labour so that the elites from Dacca could come to their village in motor cars and rickshaws. These elites included the President, a number of Cabinet Ministers, central secretaries, intellectuals and politicians from Dacca. But none came to the village Katchubari-Kristapur, and the youth there waited and wept.

But their feat was recorded, and inspired youth in many other villages in the country. "Tip-shai-chhi-chhi" became the slogan in many other places. At least thirty five villages were unofficially estimated to have eradicated the tip-shai by late 1974, and many others were well on their way.

The Rangpur Self-reliant Movement

Of a different order, the Rangpur self-reliant movement was started in mid-1973 by the Rangpur District Agricultural Officer (DAO) in an unofficial capacity. It was first launched as a Pilot Project in village Kunjipukur, a relatively egalitarian village where all landowners were peasants themselves with the richest peasant owning 30 acres of land. The movement aimed at organizing the peasants for all round development of their lives, emphasizing self-reliance to resist exploitation that comes through dependence, and with the explicit aim of eventually sending peasants to represent peasants in the Government. Through examplary personal modesty and sincerity the DAO was able to become "one" with the peasants, and Kunjipukur was soon in the news with achievements of the following order:

1) election of a "Krishi brigade" (agricultural brigade) by the peasant community in a mass meeting, for leadership in mobilizing the community for self-reliant development;

2) repayment of all outstanding loans taken by the peasants previously from the official cooperative credit schemes;

3) reform in the terms of share-cropping, raising the cultivator's share from 50 percent to 60 percent;

4) collective decision on who would work in whose land replacing the previous system of bi-lateral negotiations, which also ensured employment for all the landless or land-poor in the village;

5) a common fund in both cash and crops whose disposal the Krishi-Brigade decides in consultation with the community;

6) community planting of fruit trees on spare land anywhere in the village, collective care of the trees, and equal distribution of the fruits to the members of the collective;

7) a "people's court" to settle disputes among members of the village;

8) responsibility of raising poultry "officially" given to the women, who would sell their product and take the profit themselves to move towards economic independence from the men;

9) literacy programme, family planning, sanitary reform, sewing classes, and a general cleanliness campaign that made Kunjipukur easily the cleanest village in the country;

10) construction of economic infrastructure like roads, irrigation channels, compost pits, by free community labour;

11) collective purchase of agricultural inputs from the government and their distribution through the Krishi-brigade in consultation with the community.

Encouraged by response in Kunjipukur the movement spread to several other villages in Rangpur. Members of the Kunjipukur Krishi-brigade, as well as staff of the District and Thana Agricultural Offices themselves inspired by the FAO's efforts, worked as motivators to spread the movement in other villages. By now about 60 villages are sworn members of this movement and are taking the challenge seriously. While Kunjipukur (and a couple others) remains the show-piece model because of more favourable structural conditions, sharper economic polarizations exist in a number of other villages in the programme, the vested interests seem at least for the time being caught in the limelight of the slogan for self-reliant collective village development which is receiving general social admiration in various respectable quarters including the news media; some of the vested interests themselves are in the respective Krishi-brigades which deliberate and operate openly, and this has seemingly "trapped" these interests into cooperation with, and even prominent roles in, the movement.

The idea of self-reliance has been taken very seriously by the sponsors of the movement, which rejects begging and accepting any relief at the individual level, and any grants at the community level. "If every village takes grants from the Government, then our Government will have to beg from foreign governments; this will be a disgrace for an independent nation, and it will be the villagers who would be the cause of this national disgrace. We therefore want you to come and give us encouragement, blessings, and advice; but not your money". These simple words have become part of the vocabulary in these villages, and all offers for grants, including in one case an offer by the Minister in charge of Rural Development and Cooperatives for a grant of several thousand Takas to one of these villages in appreciation of its work in a mass meeting in the village, have been systematically declined. The most outstanding achievement of the movement perhaps was its unique way of resisting the 1974 famine [1] which hit Rangpur district the hardest, where alone an estimated 80 to 100 thousand persons died of starvation and malnutrition in 2-3 months. The self-reliant villages of Rangpur did not allow any relief to enter their boundaries, did not permit anyone to go to the relief centres (gruel kitchens) opened by the Government, and did not let anyone die: the communities met, and arranged contributions from those who had some surplus, to be given to the distressed against some work or other devised collectively.

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[1] A report on this resistance is contained in Md. Anisur Rahman, The Famine University of Dacca, Nov. 7, 1974 (mimeographed).

Relief distribution: the collective decides

Not less poignant was the experience of a team of Dacca University students and teachers who went on a relief mission to some flood-striken villages in Brahmanbaria in October 1974.[1/] People there had been starving for the previous two-to-four days and the women had little left by way of clothing. The materials taken by the relief team were too meagre relative to the need, and an agonizing distribution problem was faced. The team collected the villagers together, and asked them, almost all of them in dire need of relief, to collectively rank the families most in need of food in order of the duration of starvation, and asked the women collectively to rank those in need of saree in similar order. The response from these staggered communities, in village after village, was remarkably impressive and highly educative: after vigorous discussions the ranking was unanimous in most places, and the relief team's inability to help all but the most acutely distressed families as identified by them was fully appreciated by the people.

The lesson was clear. Here was the analytical gist of the problem of acute scarcity in daily necessities the nation would live with over the next several years, perhaps decade. Any system of distribution that would link the needy individually to the source of supply was bound to degenerate into scrambles for special privileges, and aggregate discontent about the distribution system would prevail in proportion to the sum of individual frustrations independently perceived. The problem was a collective one

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[1/] A report on the relief operation is contained in Md. Anisur Rahman, Relief Tour of Shahbajpur, Brahmanbaria, Daily Diary, University of Dacca, Oct. 1974 (mimeographed).

and had to be solved collectively. By invoking collective responsibility individual frustrations could be reduced first by the consciousness, to be acquired through the exercise of collective responsibility, of the problem of scarcity itself; secondly, through the sense of social responsibility with which the collective would be charged; thirdly, in the knowledge that the distribution system could not be fairer. One would then find some fulfilment in serving such a system itself notwithstanding one's material sufferings. Administratively, such a system would mean both democracy and and decentralization and release the energy of higher-level leadership for tackling larger issues.

Evaluation

What we have described are three of the more prominent innovative approachs to rural development in post-independence Bangladesh, and an ad-hoc experiment in distress relief distribution that brings out what is possible. The quantitative significance of all such efforts taken together in the total national landscape may not be much; but in qualitative terms these efforts represent initiatives in a new direction by sections of the society that need to be reckoned as a factor in the rural development process in Bangladesh which is certain to interact dialectically with the more traditional approaches in this area.

As long as the substance of state power in the countryside remains rooted in the vested interests there is no possibility however that efforts like the above would develop into major national thrusts. The viability of such unofficial efforts themselves would in fact be inversely proportional to the extent they hurt privileges of these interests. In this respect the People's Health Centre at Savar has certain advantages. Health has not traditionally been a hunting ground for the major vested interests in the countryside. Interests who are being affected are rather the traditional medical profession and the medical and family planning bureaucracies, and resistance from these quarters have come. After initial difficulties, the reputation that the project has gained nationally and internationally by now may provide sufficient protection to it in this respect. This also at the same time contains the seed of possible degeneration insofar as the Project is at this stage heavily dependent on external assistance both for its capital and current financial needs.

The work of the Project in the family planning area has considerably roused women's consciousness already, and its efforts to find independent earnings for the women may further contribute in this direction. The project has not yet entered substantially into the general agricultural life of the villagers. While preparations to move in this direction are afoot, it is not clear how much involved the doctors and their associates would like to be in this area, and in the near future they may not affort to be too much involved given their preoccupation in their field of primary interest. Projects like this, the operational scope of which is narrow and remains narrow, may be sustained. But for the same reason they may not contribute significantly to fundamental social change in the countryside that is necessary for overall development of the rural masses.

The literacy movement, equally, is one of narrow scope. At the moment it is not even related directly with the daily life of the villagers, and as such its motivation is provided by the impulses of the literate youth of the villages, a consciousness external to this life rather than generated internally from within it out of its own experience. Without such a root in the soil movements like this are like bubbles that will disappear and tend to be forgotten, unless external forces, such as state policy, sustain them. The movements nevertheless are important, as demonstrations of what is possible: they assert that methods are there that can be applied to the concrete conditions of the society as serious alternatives to the traditional mechanical-bureaucratic methods, methods that can mobilize the people to accomplish in a few months what otherwise could not accomplished in centuries, and that as methods these are not specific to any particular country, historical condition or socio-economic system, although their impact can be fully felt only in the appropriate socio-economic structure.

The self-reliant village movement of Rangpur is one with more complex possibilities. It embraces a much wider spectrum of village life, raises the economic and social status of the village poor, curbs privileges of the traditional vested interests and makes racketeering by the latter difficult. It socializes the peasants, and major economic and social questions previously given to bi-lateral or oligarchic exchanges and coterie decisions are now to be settled collectively. This strengthens the hitherto unsocialized mass of the poor peasants, and opens the door to growth of collective consciousness on their part about their human rights as well as their deprivations. This cannot be an equilibrium situation, and such a programme in the present context of the country must unfold sharp conflicts. Amidst exploitation by their class as a whole all over the country, the traditional vested interests in the self-reliant villages cannot be expected to submit to the collective morals of the programme with equanimity, and the glamour of collective self-reliance can at best be a very temporary sedative. Sooner or later one would expect resistance to the movement, and the resulting dialectics should be rather interesting to study.

Chapter 4

SRI LANKA

The welfare state

The performance of the Sri Lanka economy, has been cited as an examplary case of redistribution with growth.[1]

There was a growth of GDP of the order of 4% per annum during the 1950's and the 1960's. A strong and consistent "welfare" orientation among successive governments have resulted in a better distribution of income and in social services than in most Asian countries.

High rates of personal and corporate taxation over a long period of time and more recently the ceiling on incomes [2] have been the main causes of lowering the share of the high income group. Simultaneously a system of minimum wages for workers and distribution of crown land to peasants contributed to the redistributive process. Other welfare measures which benefitted the lower income groups as well were: the provision of free education from primary to university level which improved the literacy of the people and raised their aspirations; a free health service in the urban and rural areas, which helped to improve health conditions and reduce infant and maternal mortality; and a system of subsidies on essential consumer items like rice and sugar which increase the intake of calories among the lower income groups. At one stage, one kilo of rice per week was given free. In all, over half of current government expenditure was directed towards welfare programmes of one kind or another.

The result of these measures on income distribution has been summed up as follows:[3]

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[1] Hollis Chenary et. al. Redistribution with Growth, Oxford University Press, 1974.

[2] In the budget of November, 1975 the ceiling has been removed.

[3] Ibid, Page 274.

Percentage of total income received by
Decile Groups of Spending Units or Households
in Sri Lanka, 1953, 1963, 1970

Deciles	Percentage of Income: Spending Units or Households 1953	1963	1970
Lowest	1.9	1.5	3.3
Second	3.3	3.0	3.9
Third	4.1	4.0	5.0
Fourth	5.2	5.2	5.0
Fifth	6.4	6.3	6.5
Sixth	6.9	7.5	7.9
Seventh	8.3	9.0	10.0
Eighth	10.1	11.2	12.0
Ninth	13.2	15.5	15.0
Highest	40.6	36.8	30.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

The figures indicate that there has been a reduction of about 10 percentage points in the share of income received by the highest decile of households and an increase of 1.4 percentage points in the share of the lowest decile. The major part of the decrease in the former has however benefitted the next three deciles.

Apart from redistributing current income and implementing some welfare measures, an attempt was made to change the asset distribution structure through land reform. The first attempt came with the Paddy Lands Act of 1958. It was intended mainly to safeguard tenancy rights of small paddy producers. This legislation was rendered ineffective by loopholes in the original law and slow follow-up due to opposition from vested interests. In 1972, further land reforms were attempted by imposing a ceiling on land holding of twenty-five acres of paddy land or fifty acres of other agricultural land. Land in excess of these amounts was vested in the state and a variety of experiments are taking place in the use of land thus transferred to the state.

Redistribution with growth

Though there was some growth to support the welfare programmes, when viewed in the light of the requirements of high population increase, it was not sufficient to sustain them. Moreover, the growth of GDP itself fell in the 1970's. Production in the export oriented plantation agriculture sector has increased, but adverse terms of trade have reduced the value of the surplus generated from this sector. In the traditional sector, rice production and production of subsidiary food crops have not increased sufficiently to make Sri Lanka independent of food imports.

The existence of reserves and windfalls resulting from favourable terms of trade in the early years, supplemented by some aid, permitted the continuation of the welfare programmes in the 50's and the 60's. But resources available for sustained investment were limited. Adverse terms of trade in the late 60's and early 70's and population increase made it difficult to continue all the welfare services, let alone increase investment. The reserves have dwindled and external assistance is still limited. The welfare services are in fact being progressively dismantled, eg. the halving of the rice ration.

The education system improved literacy and increased people's aspirations. The problem of the kind of education imparted in the system became apparent when youth primarily from the traditional rural areas found themselves unemployed after graduation and saw few opportunities for absorption in the economy as it existed. The small expansion in the industrial sector failed to provide meaningful employment opportunities because of the inappropriate capital-intensive technology that was employed. Brain drain was symptomatic of the underlying imbalance between the education system and employment possibilities.

Notwithstanding the welfare measures, the fact that nearly every national election since independence saw a change of government in a see-saw fashion indicates a certain popular dissatisfaction with the social process as it has been unfolding. Till 1971, there was a certain passivity among the people and a willingness to work within the established framework. But as the full impact of the free education system began to raise the people's awareness, an attempt was made to force the pace of change. The insurgency of 1971 was but a symptom of the extent of social unrest in the country.

What was wrong?

The approach to development underlying Sri Lanka's policies essentially consisted of (a) maintaining the efficiency of the commercially organised plantation sector and diversifying the economy through establishment of a modern industrial sector, and (b) taxing the modern sector to subsidise the traditional sector and supplementing domestic resources with foreign aid.

For the approach to have worked the surplus in the commercially organised sector had to increase continuously. In fact, this did not happen. The plantation enclaves by their very nature could not generate indefinite additional surpluses. Further, in an economic system depending on monetary incentives, heavy taxation reduced the rate of return on capital and dampened the ability and motivation for investment. The attempt at rapid industrial development was not successful.

In the traditional sector, the provision of free rice and the price policy resulted in keeping the price at an artificially low level, discouraging production for the market. For the subsistence farmer the urge to produce more was reduced to the extent he received free rice.

Production relations are such that the masses of producers remain alienated either because they do not own the assets or decisions are in the hands of bureaucrats.

In the Sri Lanka economy, distribution is separated from production and is handled in such a way that the urge for work and thrift is reduced and material and mental dependency is increased. This alienating social structure is reflected in the political process by a competition between political parties, not in relation to increasing production, but in how much they could give to the people on whose votes they depended.

Twenty-five years of welfare administration has failed to generate a development momentum in Sri Lanka.

Chapter 5

CHINA

The ideological background

To understand the dialectics underlying the development process of China, it is necessary to trace the ideological background of the Chinese Communist Party. Almost from the beginning, there were "two lines": one was based on the peasantry led by Mao Tsetung and the other on the urban proletariat and intellectuals represented by a succession of leaders culmination in Liu Shao-Chi. The first line stood for a development philosophy whose basic tenets were: the evolution of a collective functioning on the basis of mass democracy, elimination of the "Three Great Differences" (city vs country, mental vs manual labour, worker vs peasant) and self-reliance. This approach was the economic analogue of the guerilla method of the Chinese Revolution. The other line stood for a highly centralized technocratic guidance of society towards modernization.

In 1949, when the Party took over power throughout China, the two-line struggle had remained unresolved; the inner contradictions were to accentuate further in the face of concrete choices and decisions which had to be made. While the first line was pushing socialism in the countryside, the second, inspired by the Soviet example, emphasized the development of "modern" industry. For almost a decade the two lines continued to guide the Chinese development in apparently "non-antagonistic" contradiction. However, the consequences of the second line were: bureaucratization, centralization, pyramidization; relative neglect of local industry and agriculture and the consequent shortages of articles of consumption; promotion of urban elitism; and the accentuation, rather than reduction, of the Three Great Differences.

Recognising that China was moving away from the objective of the Revolution, and that continuation of the second line would further aggravate the situation, Mao in 1958 launched the Great Leap Forward, a thrust intended to sharply accelerate socialization of agriculture, the industrialization of the rural areas and, most importantly, the mobilisation of the masses. Agriculture became the "Foundation" and industry the "Leading Sector"; China would "Walk on Two Legs", meaning the simultaneous development of large industry and a decentralized, self-reliant local industrial sector with labour-intensive techniques.[1]

The launching of the Great Leap Forward was, however, followed by the "Three Bad Years" 1959-1961 due to (a) the natural calamity created by floods and droughts, (b) the Soviet withdrawal of its aid including equipment, blueprint and personnel and (c) the fact that the spontaneous mass innovation produced poor quality equipment. The State policy, as a consequence, swung towards the "second line" bringing in the "New Economic Policy", which led to the partial restoration of capitalism in agriculture and the re-introduction of capitalistic management and motivation in industry.

By early 1965, the "two lines" were irreconciliable. The result was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution which has asserted the primacy of the Mao Line.

The Chinese leadership recognizes that class struggle continues in the "transitional period" since classes continue to exist. While the ownership problem may be resolved by socialization of property, as long as the inter-relationships among the people and the principle of income sharing have capitalistic elements a material basis for class differentiation which reinforces the remnants of the capitalistic mental framework is provided.

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[1] Though the influence of the development of the urban industrial sector and the linkage between the urban and rural sectors is recognised, an analysis of this wider system is beyond the scope of this study and is not central to the understanding of the rural development process attempted here. We have therefore concentrated on the distinctive features of the Chinese rural development strategy.

There are existing and new contradictions amongst the masses themselves, stemming from status, residual private ownership, commodity exchange and pricing mechanism, differential wage system based on work, intra- and inter-regional disparities etc. Therefore continuous class struggle punctuated by periodic shake-up's and thrusts is considered to be necessary during the transition stage.

The development process which had emerged from this ideological background is described in the following sections, which deal with the process of social transformation and mobilisation in the rural area. The annexure describes the morphology of local industry in the post-Cultural Revolution period.

The prelude

The Chinese approach to rural development has been deeply influenced by the course of the Chinese revolution. Peasants were the base of the revolution supplying the major part of the human resources for the party and the red army and the safe spatial milieu for the growth of the party in its infancy; subsequent experience reinforced the mutual confidence and built up a bond based on trust and respect.

The communists assumed national power in 1949 with two decades of local experience, particularly in the Yenan base area, which gave them the confidence that self-reliant development was possible with a total mobilization of the masses. Experimentation had also taught them methods for arousing the masses, gaining the sympathy of a vast majority and had given them insights into the recruitment and training of local cadres.

It was the approach and attitude derived from almost thirty years of work in the rural areas which provided the framework for the Chinese rural development programme for the next decade.

The first mobilization: land reform (1949-52)

The very first policy thrust of the new government, which in fact started in the liberated areas even before 1949, was thorough land reform which fundamentally altered the asset distribution structure and power and production relationships in the countryside. Generally the approach to land reform was cautious, and while eliminating landlord and benefitting millions of poor peasants, it aimed not to alienate likely allies in middle peasant category, so that opposition and disruption during the swift transition period lasting less than four years, could be kept at a minimum.

The conduct of the land reform programme demonstrated the importance the regime attached to the process of bringing about structural change even if the latter were crucial and urgent. Nothing would have been easier than carrying out the reforms by a simple decree. Instead, the party chose the occasion for the first nationwide arousal of the masses, using the vehicle of land reform. It opted for a clear policy that reforms were not to be a favour bestowed by a "benevolent monarch" on the obedient masses. It was to be the people themselves, collectively, who were to examine the problem, evolve a solution and organize themselves to implement the institutional change to the satisfaction of the vast majority. The party cadres were to play only a catalytic role, helping to raise relevant issues and aiding in the systematic conduct of mass meetings to ensure constructive action rather than negative sporadic acts of settling age old feuds.

While in a large country aberrations and excesses were unavoidable, the basic philosophy of mass-administered reform remained unchanged. The sovereignty of the masses was not easily communicated to a people used to authority, good or bad. Strong measures were required to bring home this philosophy both to the masses and to the cadre, who naturally appeared to many as the representatives of "authority". This "collective emotional shock" was administered by throwing the cadres to the judgement of the masses.[1] The open rectification campaigns of this period were aimed at establishing the right of the masses to judge the "leaders", to criticize them and even remove them if necessary, thereby introducing their own approach to democracy.

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[1] Hinton, W., Fanshen, Monthly Review Press, 1966.

The process of land reform then served not only the obvious purpose of dealing with the basic source of inequality, but sought to liberate the peasants physically and mentally from the old landlords on the one hand and the possible future wielders of authority, the party cadres, on the other. The message of the revolution was thus conveyed to them in the process of their participation in discussion and action. The consciousness generated by this process was to be a crucial factor in the successful functioning of the social institutions which were to follow land reform. These institutions were predicated on the active involvement and participation of the masses in shaping their own environment and programme. The process of land reform was therefore to be the first experience of the peasants in the exercise of democratic decision making.

Another major aim of land reform was the creation of new local cadres with non-authoritarian, non-bureaucratic values. The identification, education and testing of new leaders - mainly young - who challenged and defeated the traditional feudal leadership of the village permitted the new order to penetrate the "natural" village and establish direct links with the masses.

Enhanced consciousness of the masses, a new type of leadership and a democratic relationship between them were the positive fall-outs of the process.

In economic terms, the net savings ratio rose from 1-2% in 1949 to 20% in 1953.[1] It has been maintained at this level since then.

Consolidation, peasant farming and collectivization (1952-55)

Land distribution created millions of small peasant proprietors possessing in most cases miniscule parcels of uneconomic holdings. Considering the communist approach to production it could not have been their intention to stabilize the structure in this mould, which supports the view that the regime was more concerned at this stage with the process than with the immediate structural outcome. Indeed following land reforms a continuous educational campaign was launched to pursuade the peasants to realize the benefits of cooperation with a progressive movement away from private ownership. Again the approach adopted was to encourage discussion and experimentation which was facilitated by the higher consciousness the masses had acquired during the land reform phase.

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[1] Gurley, J., "Rural Development in China" in Employment in Developing Nations, Ed. E.D. Edwards, Columbia University Press 1974, p. 385.

But the gradual pace of voluntary cooperativization of peasant proprietors led to a phenomenal growth of individualistic and capitalistic tendencies among the new and the old proprietors. Considering the struggle to have ended, even some of the cadres, who had also acquired some land, succumbed to the temptation of tending more to their land than to their political responsibilities. Moreover, this development received encouragement from a section of the party, supporters of the "Second Line", who felt that production would benefit by the peasants' new found enthusiasm to derive maximum gain out of their own land. Even the increase in disparities growing out of the richer or the more enterprising buying up land from the others was not viewed with adequate concern. The forces of degeneration were thus emerging, at the lowest level; thereby bureaucracy operating at administrative levels removed from the village, gradually assumed greater importance.

With the dissipation of mass consciousness and the replacement of village-based party cadre by external bureaucracy, a further retrogression occurred: the traditional leadership began to re-emerge even in the new cooperative institutions, further distorting the objectives of socio-economic development. The bureaucracy, aware that the regime desired co-operativization, and impatient with the painstaking process of education and discussion, at times tended to meet the targets by adopting pressure tactics and even exaggerating the achievements. This again was a reflection at the ground level of the differences within the leadership on the importance of mass democracy.

The second mobilization: the march to the communes(1955-59)

The movement from small mutual aid teams through simple co-operatives, with retention of the concept of private land ownership, to advanced co-operatives or collectives with abolition of private ownership, was uneven and at times uncertain. Wherever consciousness was higher and the democratic process operated, the logic of co-operation among an ever increasing number of people in a wider area in an expanding range of activities was indicated by the benefits derived; where bureaucratically imposed nominal organizational structures were erected exploitation in many forms continued and even intensified with short-term individual gains taking precedence over long-term community benefits.

Economically, the rural sector was in danger of throttling the forces of production; politically, the vast multitude of the country was retrogressing.

Recognizing these dangers, the party in 1955 revised its programme and with personal intervention by Mao, greatly accelerated the pace of collectivization, moving within three years to the creation of the peoples communes, which were not only larger units but went beyond agricultural to embrace all other local economic activities including industries, and further, absorbed the entire governmental and party functions and structures in the area to become truly comprehensive self-governing entities. Reactivation of the party cadre, removal of central bureaucracy from spheres taken over by the commune and the creation of appropriate economic units accompanied by democratic structures at various levels from the village to the commune gave a renewed impetus to the process of mass participation, handing over to the people even greater sovereignty in the management of their affairs and community life. The initiative lost during the phase of vacillating policies was regained and the enthusiasm of the people restored.

The third mobilization: the great leap forward (1958)

Even while the country was being stirred up by the new order brought on by the commune, the leadership embarked on an unprecedented mobilization of the masses which this time was to manifest itself in concrete physical achievements of collective labour. Massive projects of land shaping and irrigation, while demonstrating the value of cooperation to the participants in visual products, gave the masses concrete issues to be discussed collectively and settled consensually. The very size of the projects made individual thinking irrelevant and insignificant, except as a part of a collective effort.

Great Leap Forward called on the masses and workers to innovate. There were two reasons for this. Ideology implied the all-round development of the masses, requiring their participation and involvement in all stages of the development process, and a mass-based technology in the countryside was essential to give a real meaning to the concept of mass participation. The second reason was pragmatic: modern technology was just not adequate to carry out industrialization and mechanization of agriculture for lack of capital; but indigenous technology has its limitations and itself had to become "modern" by successive stages of learning and improvement. The large scale modern sector was therefore not to be dismantled but was to co-exist side by side, and indeed help in the modernization process of the indigenous sector.

The effort to disperse industry in the countryside, though technologically not totally successful, gave the millions of peasants the first direct exposure to science and technology and paved the way for later more national decentralization of industry through the policy of "walking on two legs".

The pause and partial retreat (1960-64)

Before the benefits of the last mobilization could be consolidated China suffered three years of bad weather and harvests, whose disruptive effect confused and called into question the measures of the last few years. Short term efforts at raising food production tended to rely more on direct economic incentives to individuals in the form of a reward system based on bureaucratically determined "work points", increase in the size of private plots and the partial restoration of a free market. The structure of the commune remained, but the supporting democratic process was damaged by the re-creation of bureaucratic machinery and the primacy of individual interests. Collective investments and social development - whose benefits are long term - were retarded. The newly emerging value system was smothered by the throw-back to pre-revolution norms and objectives.

There was intense debate within the party on the correctness of the "New Economic Policy" associated with Liu; the peasants themselves were not all convinced of the direction, having been exposed to other positive experiences in the meanwhile.

The fourth mobilization: the great proletarian cultural revolution (1966)

Seventeen years after the establishment of the Peoples' Republic and almost a decade after the total structural transformation of the rural society the overall gains had no doubt been impressive: feudal property relations had been replaced by efficient management units; production had increased substantially; extreme poverty had been eradicated and greater equality achieved; education and health services and communication had improved; partial mechanization of agriculture and supporting industrialization had been introduced. These were major achievements affecting 500 million people.

However, inspite of the repeated efforts punctuated by the three periods of intensive mass mobilization, Mao's primary goal, which was total involvement of the masses, remained fickle and elusive. Sustained self-reliant development which was the very basis of Chinese strategy was being subverted by heavy dependence on formal institutions, administrative devices and individualistic incentives.

The ascendency of the Second Line was at its peak; Communist China was at the farthest point from its revolutionary goals enunciated in the Yenan days.

The cultural revolution was the massive intervention which sought to reverse the tide and to overcome the negative tendencies accumulated since 1949, aroused the masses against the inhibiting structures, government and party. Criticism, questioning of authority, uninhibited discussion, continuous study, innovation, and pride in overcoming adversity to attain self-reliance became the new norms. Moral incentives were stressed though material incentives continued in a modified form. The effort to eliminate the distinction between those who performed physical labour and those who functioned in administrative positions by insisting that all must participate in physical labour helped reduce the distance between the two groups and contributed to making the functioning of the commune more democratic.

The commune concept was more explicitly linked to the earlier pre-revolutionary institution of self-sufficient "red base". To the extent that a commune was encouraged to become self-reliant, interference with its internal working and programme by external "authorities" also lessened, which in turn encouraged a more participatory planning style within the commune, percolating all the way down to the village team. All these processes were mutually reinforcing and had a deep impact on the individuals and the society.

During the decade following the cultural revolution the communes have developed significantly. The basic philosophy and approach have remained unchanged and with experience the method of working has improved. Past experience shows however that unless continuous vigilance is maintained, and the ideals reinforced at periodic intervals, the society could again degenerate into routine bureaucratic and mechanical modes, alienating the people.

The cultural revolution was not simply a mobilization of the usual type under non-antagonistic contradictions. It was, indeed, the continuation of the Chinese revolution and its extension into the super-structure. The replacement of the old structure by the new did not result in the automatic replacement of the old superstructure by a new one consonant with the ideals of the revolution. The latter had to be ushered in by the cultural revolution.

ANNEXURE: Morphology of Local Industry

Cultural revolution and local industry

After the cultural revolution, the basic line of the Great Leap Forward and "Walking on Two Legs" was resumed with some modifications. The spontaneous character of the Mass Line in innovations have been disciplined and reduced in size and number. The self-reliance and decentralization policies have been preserved for ideological, natural, technical and strategic reasons: mobilization of the masses and their "graduation" to a new higher ideological level requires learning by doing; mountains, rivers and other topographical factors create transportation problems; appropriate technology calls for self-reliant industries based on local resources; for military reasons, it is desirable to have self-reliant "base areas" in the hinterland.

The Chinese believe that the simultaneous development of big, small and medium enterprise, makes it possible to bring into full play the initiative at all levels and to draw millions of people into industry. Agricultural mechanization and creation of an industrial base are given top priority. The geographical distribution of industrial activity is emphasized for minimizing transport costs, developing the specific regional resources, and eliminating the "three great differences". It is also claimed that both productivity and capital accumulation arguments favour simultaneous development of big, medium and small industries with bias towards the latter at this stage of development. The small industries, due to their flexibility and adaptability, can explore new techniques and many of the indigenous methods, after suitable adaptation, can be used to solve problems of advanced technology.

Characteristics of local industry

Local industries include all industrial branches not attached to the central industrial departments and all industrial enterprises run by provinces, administrative regions, counties, people's communes or production brigades. Some of these industries are also attached to schools and hospitals.

China has developed three kinds of local industry:

a) Process industries: iron and steel, cement, fertilizer and other chemicals. There are more than 1800 small cement works spread over 60% of the 2100 counties with combined output in 1971 exceeding 40% of China's total cement production. In 1972, 60% of total production of chemical fertilizers came from local plants.

b) Agricultural machinery repair and manufacturing network: the network consists of three levels - county, commune and brigade - with the following respective functions:-

County: repair and manufacture
Commune: repair and assemble
Brigade: repair

By 1971, 90% of the counties had set up the "three-level network". This sector produces farm machinery and equipment needed for agriculture as well as machine tools for the actual production of the machinery.

c) Agricultural and sideline products (light industries): these are flour milling, oil pressing, cotton ginning, yarn spinning, textiles, soya sauce, canned fruit, etc. They are to be seen at county, commune and brigade levels.

Scale and order of establishing local industries are dictated by the following considerations:

a) Pilot plant approach: Lack of trained manpower and suitable raw materials dictate setting up pilot plants with small capacity. As time passes, skill, experience and problem solving capacity are developed. Scale of operation is gradually increased. This avoids collasal wastes characteristics of industrial estate programmes in other underdeveloped countries.

b) Diversification: As an industry is set up, it makes possible the release of raw materials from one use to another or absorbs hitherto unused raw materials in a new line. For example, cement and brick production released straw as an input from housing to paper industry. Food plant industry and orchard created the need for bottling; quartz sand was used to start glass plant which not only produced bottles but also electric bulbs, which was not originally planned for but was found practicable without much extra affort. The "the nose brings ear" law thus creates diversification of industries.

The development of farm machinery production requires an adequate supply of basic equipment like lathes, grinders, drilling machines, milling machines, etc. to keep the repair work running smoothly. The possession of these advanced equipment makes possible production of other things without much additional inputs and changes. Steel hammers, sledge hammers, roller bearings, etc. have thus been produced to fulfill orders placed by the state for use either in the national industries or for repair work in other countries. Production of heavy spare parts for the national industries also have become possible. Thus "subcontracting" seems to have appeared on the scene.

Management

All enterprises have a leading technical group made up of workers, technicians and management personnel. The individual workshops too have their small technical groups. Before equipment is made, "study visits" are undertaken to plants which have been successful in similar lines and are known for spirit of thrift and ingenuity. The key note is discussion meeting where workers, technicians and management to thrash out ideas and arrive at a consensus.

The strong emphasis on small and medium enterprises has meant that almost all the established enterprises have been drawn into the process of transferring technical and managerial skills into the new ones, besides supplying machinery and designing and developing new equipment for the use of the new enterprise. In the process, both gain from the exposure.

Mechanization of agriculture

One of the major purposes of local industrialization is the mechanization of agriculture. As local industry develops, agricultural mechanization proceeds from improved hand tools to horse-drawn earth moving equipment to power tillers and lastly to tractors. The communes have depended mainly on their own surpluses for the manufacture or purchase of farm equipment. The labour released through mechanization is not being rendered surplus or redundant as in other Third World countries but is being productively absorbed locally in further intensification of agriculture itself, in building infrastructure and in new industrial activities.

The development of rural industries would not have been possible without the new schooling system and the public health sector. Students, administrators and experts have left the cities and gone to the villages to promote positive attitudes towards modernization. This has also helped reduce the "three great differences". Rural industrialization has brought forth leadership and innovative qualities in participants and their children. Out of all this may evolve a less alienating and creative process of stronger control of industrialization that will be better integrated with the living needs of the masses of the Chinese society.

PART III

RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Chapter 6

INTRODUCTION

The lessons

The experiences narrated so far have both negative and positive lessons. In the great bulk of Asia rural masses are not being liberated. Some governments are often trying top-down processes of "development" that seek to serve the masses through bureaucracies and the rural vested interests, the very agents from whom the rural masses need in fact to be liberated. Central planning and controls have tended to take away initiatives the rural masses previously had or could have taken and thrown them more at the mercy of the above two forces. The result is a continued degeneration of the Asian personality: starving, semi-starving, dehumanized millions; nations, referred to as international basket cases, who have lost their self-respect and sense of their own potentials. The vested interests themselves have lacked the necessary drive - the entrepreneurial quality - to achieve development even on their own terms. The recent awakening to possibilities of the "Green Revolution" is rather too late: land-man ratio has deteriorated, and the polarisation of society that the Green Revolution would require for most of Asia is no longer a tenable proposition.

On the positive side serious efforts are being made in China to restore creative initiative and collective self-respect of its rural society. The course has not been smooth and resistances have often veered it. But the experience of a quarter century are instructive.

Evidence is available that what has been possible in China is not specific to its own historical course which in fact was as dismal as any until conscious and determined human action altered it; the impulses in Bangladesh are knocks at the door; the Santhal movement in India has been even more assertive. These efforts will not develop into a national force without appropriate leadership which has to lead the masses into effective political power. This therefore is the precondition.

Asian nations stuck in deep mud as they are need a massive redirection and thrust to lift the wheels up and set them moving again. For this the initiative must be taken by the masses. This means realisation of the concept of full democracy which seeks to give the substance of political power to the rural masses in shaping their lives.

Masses defined

Masses may be defined for our purpose as those who do not have any power in society derived from property, wealth, religion, caste, expertise, office or such other sources not widely shared. For Asian societies the concept broadly overlaps with the landless and the land-poor in the countryside and the working class in the towns, save those elements of these classes who nevertheless may enjoy special status by virtue of extra-economic attributes (e.g., the Brahmin). Thus defined, the rural masses constitute some 70 to 80 percent of the population in Asia and must therefore together be the main driving force for transforming society.

Masses, leadership and democracy

The emergence of mass initiative cannot be spontaneous in societies where the rural masses have become objectively and subjectively dependent on elitist rule; it has to be steered by a committed leadership with very special qualities.

This leadership must represent the masses in a genuine sense and be committed to their liberation as its primary task. Genuine representation, like the very concept of participatory democracy we have discussed, implies much more than formal voting into power once in a few years. It requires instead integration of the leaders with the masses through a systematic sharing of lives. They must have mass involvement in the task of steering social change. Commitment in turn requires that the leadership does not use its position and power for personal or factional privileges nor to accomplish glamorous tasks for their own sake, but tests all policy alternatives and actions from the point of view of their impact on the lives of the masses. It also requires that the leadership systematically submits ideas and actions for critical examination by the masses in a continuous dialogue with the latter so that the ideas of the masses form an organic part of the thought process of the leadership itself. It requires, above all, commitment to full participatory democracy at the grass root level, and bridging of the "consciousness gap" between the leadership and the masses so that the masses become progressively less dependent on consciousness external to their own lives.

The perspective

The process of such a leadership (a party) coming into power can be discussed only in the concrete and cannot be generalized. For each country this will rest on its specific internal, geo-political and global context, and also on the creative strategy to be adopted by the mass-rooted party against resistance to its ascendance into power.

Once a genuinely mass-rooted leadership does come into power the tasks before it will be formidable, and a perspective for action will be necessary. Historical experiences available to date, (some of them reviewed in Part II), suggest certain fundamental considerations, broad principles and a direction for effort that may be worth keeping in view. In the following three chapters some of these are spelled out, insofar as they relate to the dynamic questions of social transformation (Chapter 7), principles of institution-building (Chapter 8) and tentative sketch of the organizational structure of society (Chapter 9) that may emerge from an effort at social transformation in broad accord with the direction visualized in this study.

Chapter 10 conceptualizes the need for action research to probe the dynamics of mass-consciousness at any stage of history.

It may be noted that what is outlined in the following chapters is not intended to be prescriptive; if they were this would militate against the very methodology of our study. The concrete strategy and actions that will be taken by a mass-rooted leadership after it comes into political power, and the specific sequence in which the various steps will be taken, will be country-specific and original; their choice will be circumscribed by the historical evolution of the specific society and the world-historical context in which it finds itself, their time-sequence will be governed by the inner dynamics of evolution of the new social order. These therefore can neither be prescribed nor predicted. But considerations suggested by history as it has been, are valuable in providing a framework for scientific choice of policies; and at any point of time scientific choice requires a perspective however tentative it may be. This perspective itself is a matter of voluntary choice; but such voluntary choice, as also the choice of more specific policies to be taken in response to specific circumstances that will unfold as a result of interaction between historical forces and ex-post voluntary choice and action, can only be the more enlightened the more are lessons taken from history.

While the principles outlined in the following three chapters would be of immediate operational interest for societies where a mass-rooted leadership has actually come into power, for other societies at different stages of their historical evolution those concerned and working for the liberation of their rural masses also need a vision of the direction of possibilities and the problems involved in steering a major redirection of society. Though the formal ascendance of mass power constitutes a critical point in the process of social evolution, the process itself is in a sense continuous: what can be done and will be done after mass-rooted leadership comes into power will be determined among other things by what the society inherits at that point. The course of all major social transformations has in this sense been circumscribed by this heritage: the specific character of the Chinese Revolution as distinct from the Soviet, for example, has its roots in the distinctive evolution of Chinese society from the ancient days. To the extent that the scope of voluntary human action exists in all stages of history within the orbit circumscribed by history, those concerned with social change in countries which have not yet matured for a major social transformation may also benefit by absorbing the experience of societies far advanced in the process of transformation. With this perspective as an input and an understanding of the concrete conditions of the country in question as the base, the leadership will form its own vision of the future and accordingly chart its own course of action. It is in this sense that for these latter countries also such perspective as attempted in the following chapters is necessary.

The analysis as presented here deals with the resolution of the more antagonistic conflicts seen in the task of social transformation from historical experiences. The trend that thus emerges has been extrapolated into an ideal construct.

Chapter 7

TRANSFORMING SOCIETY

A dialectical process

Conventional development thinking assumes a conflict-free social framework for change. Policies are suggested to "get us there". But reality is different. Until identity between the individual and the collective is complete any policy will benefit some and hurt others. There is in this sense no "painless" path to change. This is true even of so-called "Pareto-superior" moves which also frustrate individual aspirations if these are not identical with collective goals. Those who would thus be "hurt" would naturally resist. It then becomes a struggle, a process of pushing through resistance, a process essentially dialectical.

A leadership rooted in the masses if and when it assumes formal power has therefore to discern forces for and against social change in order to evolve its strategy.

The odds will be heavy: The old exploiters of the masses will work for an opportunity to recapture power; elitist "middle class" will be unwilling to adjust to a drastic scaling down of privileges; archaic social cultures that characterize so much of Asia - fatalism, castes and taboos, the dependence of women on men - will not dissolve easily. The new leadership itself may not have the necessary experience in economic and social administration fully appropriate to their new mobilizational role; this depends on how much time and opportunity they had to experiment their ideas before coming into power. They may need the services of sections of the former vested interests to the extent that their experience and skill remain strategic in keeping production from collapsing; this will be the more necessary the greater has been the extent of "modernization" in the economy until then. Resulting concessions to the vested interests, in terms of positions and material privileges, would make them to that extent stronger.

The new leadership itself, including its cadres, may not be fully homogeneous in terms of values, attitudes and strength of character. Hangovers from elitism, bureaucratic administrative styles, traditional respect for narrow specialists, etc., may be present in various degrees in their consciousness and sub-consciousness. The rural masses in their turn would be dependent on directions from above by tradition. A continuation of such sense of dependence would provide opportunity for elitist attitudes of leaders and the cadres to take roots again and develop. The glamour of "modern" technology efficient only in the context of economically more advanced societies would not die out easily; this in turn would strengthen the pull towards narrow professionalism, elitism and hierarchical-bureaucratic administration. Furthermore, heightened aspirations about possibilities of the new leadership may give correspondingly less time to experiment and learn from mistakes: to many even among its own ranks an elitist style of administration would appear ready-made and would seem to work; the alternatives might be little more than a philosophy until given concrete practical content which would need to be developed through live experimentation in dialectical confrontation with the old order. Finally, the larger is the society to be transformed the more difficult the task of transformation will be through resistance as heavy as all these.

On the positive side is the failure of the old system and of its change-agents. The greater this failure is the more will people look forward to a total change. The oppressed groups in society have little to lose, and they are the majority. The deeper the leadership is rooted in them the greater is its power to mobilize them. The masses would be prepared to follow a leadership whose personal integrity is visible and who not merely promise, but practise a system that works in the open and is seen to be just. There would be other patriotic forces in various walks of life, frustrated at the degeneration of social personality and seeking fulfilment in assisting change. Visible demonstration of commitment of leadership will attract many of them. The youth relatively unspoiled yet by corrupting influences of society have potentials which can be harnessed. The progressive role of youth in other societies inspires them. Many of them are socialised in schools, the playground and other associations and are to that extent malleable to group stimuli to serve society. The process of coming into power of the new leadership itself can be an asset-building force. The longer and more difficult this process and the greater the depth of mass involvement, the greater would have been its contribution: the creation of mass consciousness; training of the leaders in mass mobilization; disciplining and hardening the people; testing commitment of leaders and setting new standards for leadership; and building up cadres with leadership qualities in various degrees.

Much of these remain, nevertheless, imponderables against the more solid, deep-rooted, odds. In the ultimate analysis the inspirational power of a committed leadership over the masses is the last resort. This requires exemplary personal conduct by the leadership, a power to galvanize the masses into collective action; and the ultimate ability to stay in their trust and support through possible setbacks. This is easier perhaps for a smaller society where a committed leadership can remain in systematic physical contact with the masses and keep the latter inspired. For larger societies alternative methods to substitute the "physical cult" would be necessary. This makes the ability to communicate and inspire through non-physical means - the newspaper, radio books etc. - an asset of considerable importance.

Fundamental considerations

With such deep-rooted and powerful resistance as above, small efforts are bound to fail. Evidence is clear from history that gradualist and piecemeal efforts at social change even if genuinely motivated backslide into the hands of the vested interests. There must be a critical minimum effort to gain ground at all. The greater the resistance the greater must be the first very important thrust. This indeed is the logical substance of the "revolutionary" as distinguished from the "reformist" approach.

A thrust in the context of social change is defined as a determined move to smash impediments to change and redirect orientation of society. It is by conception indifferent to second order considerations. It destroys but does not by itself create institutions. The latter is the task of consolidation, which trims the new and emerging social relations of their excesses, and knits them in a systematic institutional framework. Subsequent thrusts will be needed to take society on a still higher level of collective life and consciousness. Forces of resistance would themselves regroup and reappear in different forms after initially losing ground. To combat them again more thrusts will be necessary.

While consolidation differs in concept from the thrust its foundation is laid in the very method employed for the latter. Social change is not a discrete sequence of target-attaining but a continuous process where the ends are inseparable from the means. A change which appears "progressive" in the abstract may nevertheless alienate the masses further or give them distorted interests in it, if it is accomplished by, say, a bureaucratic method. For this reason the method employed for the thrust, and for that matter for any change, must be so chosen as to naturally generate the desired institutions and cultures.

Liberation is also inhibited rather than helped if change is ahead of mass consciousness. For change to be accomplished by the masses and serve its liberating purpose the masses must be subjectively ready for it. Consciousness may be latent and can be roused; but if so it has to be roused before action is initiated. Consciousness requires however living experience interacting with reflection (as distinguished from feeling) and collective deliberation, without which action might be "spontaneous" and prone to rashness.

Of the many tasks of liberation two are basic: one is to destroy dominance-dependence relations in the society. Age, sex and land relations are the three major dominance-dependence relations in oppressed Asia; in India the caste and the joint family system are also of the same category. The dominance has to be broken by rousing the dependents against the dominants collectively. Individually the dominated is weak and susceptible to manipulation. The dominance has to be broken both structurally and psychologically, i.e. by enthusing the spirit of self-reliance among the traditionally dominated.

In breaking a dominance-dependence relation the specific oppressed group must take the initiative. Elements from other oppressed groups may have greater understanding and sympathy than others for the former and may be valuable allies in its liberation. In particular the youth, often oppressed by the aged and seeking to express and assert itself, may be found ready to respond to the call of a committed leadership to help mobilize other oppressed groups to break corresponding dominance-dependence relations.

The other basic task is liberation from the narrowness of individualistic thinking (see Chapter 1) and creating the collective spirit. The sense of community still prevails in pre-capitalist Asian agriculture on which the rural collective may be built. But in daily life individualism has already taken root save in some tribal and semi-tribal communities. This necessitates the raising of collective consciousness first through less formal, but not less intense, collective activities before instituionalising the collective. The process of raising such consciousness starts with the very thrust towards breaking the dominance-dependence relations which we have indicated is a collective action.

Mobilization: land reform

Land is the primary source of income and wealth in rural Asia. Inequality in the distribution of land is therefore the primary source of inequality in income, wealth and hence power. There cannot be genuine democracy in a framework of polarized land ownership.

Exploitation through land ownership is felt directly to the extent that a peasant personally harvests his product and hands over a share of it in kind or cash to the land owner. This is a dominance-dependence relationship that is on or near the frontier of consciousness already. Indirect exploitation of the land-poor and landless by the land-rich takes place through the latter's social and political power, and also through its command over economic staying power (working capital for the peasant's subsistence during process of production, reserve capital for contingencies, etc.). The result is not only the mass misery seen in such societies; it has also alienated the poor peasant from work itself which as we have noted is natural to man and gives him pleasure and fulfilment.

Rural development cannot be said to have begun without land reform. This by itself is hardly in dispute today, and almost every government in Asia has promised it. But governments essentially representing landed interests have accomplished little. There have often been motions without action; legislations with loopholes; appeals to lack of records. Vested interests cannot liquidate themselves.

A test of mass-based leadership for rural Asia indeed is whether it launches a genuine land reform programme as its first major thrust. Delay will not only retard the process of mass liberation; it will give the landed interests time to manipulate and dilute the very power base of the leadership. The problem of records will be the easiest one to solve: the masses know the facts and mass meetings are all that will be needed to collect them.

Land reform offers a powerful instrument for release of mass initiative if it is carried out through mass action and not imposed from above. The masses must be asked to get together to deliberate and decide how they want to redistribute land. This will give them valuable social education and help train them in the new task of collective administration; conflicting claims arising out of heterogeneity of the masses will have to be faced and resolved. Thus the process of land reform would be as important as the reform itself.

Land reform through mass action will be, as is intended to be, an intense experience in the collective life of the rural masses. For the first time in ages they will feel that real power is theirs, and they can collectively accomplish what has long been promised but denied them. The real foundation for building the collective spirit is thereby laid: this cannot be taught by preachings but has to be learnt through experience in real life. It also gives an opportunity for other dominance-dependance relations to be shaken up: women and youth, the low castes, even the children, will be in the thick of this experience which will shock them emotionally and help remove deep-seated inhibitions in their minds as well. The shock will lay the foundation of new social relations even outside the framework of land, in the field and in the family in daily life. Subsequent thrusts to break the other dominance-dependence relations will thus be made easier.

Mobilization: collectivization

While in Asian rural societies the sense of community in broad terms still prevails, the peasants may still have a strong desire to own land individually. It would be undialectical to ignore this possible contradiction and to attempt collectivization straight from such a position. On the other hand individual land ownership, however equitable the distribution initially, tends to backslide into inequalities in income and even in land ownership, and such economic polarization breeds polarization of power as well. For this reason rural mass power may not be sustained for long under individual land ownership - the source of spontaneous capitalism.

Collective ownership of land is also needed for deploying land and technology, exploiting economies of scale, and for the fullest possible mobilization of mass labour for building the economic infrastructure necessary for rapid economic growth. Under individual ownership the benefits of such collective self-employment will mainly be seen in narrow individual terms and will often be doubted. Thus work will remain undone while labour will remain idle.

For all these reasons steps should be taken towards subjective preparation of the peasants for collectivization early, by introducing cooperative and collective work of various types, demonstration of collective farming, and social analysis and education thereon in mass meetings.

Mobilization: building infrastructure

Although sustained collective self-employment to the fullest extent possible may not be obtained until ownership of property is collectivized, a lot is possible after land reform. Inspiring leadership has mobilized people for voluntary work even under less equitable property relations the ethics of which may however be questioned. After an egalitarian land reform through collective action that energizes the masses the possibilities are greater, and the equity question less serious particularly if subsequent collectivization is eventually visualized. In fact, collective self-employment is itself a method of raising consciousness and thus enhances subjective preparation of the masses for collective ownership.

While land reform shakes up the property relations, the construction of massive irrigation channels, dikes and dams, land reclamation and land shaping shakes up individualism which otherwise might persist after land reform. A new culture of collective labour is created, and what is possible by mass action and with little "capital" is demonstrated. An effective irrigation channel or a dam turns a barren land green or a flood land into a granary; the masses have done this with their own hands, working together as they have never done before, at the call of a leadership that is their own, and everyone - the leaders, the school teacher and the students, the village doctor, even the women who have always been under "purdah" - have worked with them. There have been singing, dancing and festivities all the time as the work has proceeded, and the loudspeaker has continuously reported on what is happening where and who is doing what, and what is to be done now, creating and maintaining a sense of unity all through so that no one feels isolated. An environment is in fact created where not to participate in the collective work is itself terrible isolation.

A single catalytic project like the above, massive in size and bold in imagination would go a long way in stirring up the collective spirit of the masses while at the same time cementing the bond between the masses and the leadership that conceives and guides them into it with living fellowship. The gains thus reaped may then be consolidated in mass meetings to discuss and analyze what has happened and how, and where the masses would like to go from here. New mass institutions of decision-making, evaluation and vigilance would already have germinated in the field, new cadres thrown up and the commitment and abilities of old cadres tested further. With careful handling by the leaders the masses themselves would consolidate the new experience and move forward.

A fundamental value to be created through all this is self-reliance. The importance of doing it the hard way from the very beginning cannot be overemphasized. Shock projects should be so chosen that have traditionally waited for state patronage and money or looked impossible and yet are within the means of a roused and mobilized community. State patronage has often destroyed traditional practices for collective work, like building or maintenance of public utilities, the caring of community property (e.g., tanks) which would not be done any longer because the state is supposed to do it. Withdrawal of the "benevolent" state is therefore a prerequisite for bringing back collective self-reliance. The masses should be asked to deliberate on what they can give, instead of merely receiving. Such achievements should be highlighted nationally. Within the community, the pride should be shared with all groups, men, women, youth, the old and the children, so that it can be sustained by mutual reinforcement.

The mobilization of women is another important task. A society cannot be liberated unless its women also are. They are half of the working population, the first educator of a child, and doubly oppressed. Talks of population control without liberation of women are naive. Women cannot be liberated unless they, too, become self-reliant economically and emotionally. As we have suggested, involving them in shock collective projects will itself serve as a liberator of minds. But more will be needed by way of organising them to deliberate upon, assert and wrest their rights.

Remoulding the elites

The leadership needs a machinery to reconstruct society. Part of this is provided by the cadres of its own ranks. New cadres are also created as reconstruction proceeds. But more are needed as social life has so many sectors and divisions, spatial and functional.

The elites of the old society have their expertise. This may often be of the wrong kind as it might not be based on living knowledge of society's needs and possibilities. The "elitist culture" is by itself divisive and produces distorted values. The more the inherited elites are prepared to remould themselves the greater their utility to the new society. This means wanting to be useful to the masses on the latter's terms, and sharing life's hardship with them.

Here is another area where a determined programme would be necessary. Postponement and gradualism will be counter productive and will only strengthen resistance. A massive go-to-the-village thrust for the urban elites to participate in the process of land reform, mass infrastructure building, technology dissemination, literacy drive, etc. should be an integral component of the early shake-ups. The accent should be on sharing the villagers' lives including doing physical labour with them, becoming useful to them and acceptable as one of them, and learning from them. Elitist tendencies will need to be constantly watched and exposed for discussion and corrective action in public rather than suppressed. The fuller is the exposure of the forces the more complete and permanent will their destruction be, and the greater will become mass consciousness and vigilance against their subtleties.

The much-awaited technological transformation of rural Asia requires first and foremost a transformation of attitudes and methods in technological research, adaptation and dissemination. The strategy as we have stated have to be inner-directed. This presupposes an inward-looking attitude: a technology is good not because it is being used in an "advance" country, but because it fits into the resource and cultural setting of the society concerned. Specific choices are matters of concrete options; but appropriate choices cannot start being made unless attitudinal biases against mass-oriented technology (in the sense of what the masses can understand and adopt as part of their daily lives), and technology that looks less glamorous but uses local resources including the massive unskilled manpower more fully, can be eliminated.

Such technology choice cannot be made in isolation from mass life because that would make one miss the nuances of mass culture, their felt needs and their adaptability. The thrust for go-to-the-village movement is for this reason particularly strategic for the society's technological experts. Once there, they will also find how much they have to learn from the villagers themselves by way of simple and effective technological devices which they would not have thought of in alien environments. It would then be their task to improve upon such innovations using their advanced scientific knowledge and encourage the villagers further to innovate.

In each country a lot of technological know-how is available that is appropriate to local conditions but not widely known. Programmes for quick dissemination of available technology can and should be undertaken for (a) increase of agricultural output from given land and water increase in the local production of agricultural inputs like manures; (b) absorbing spare local labour (of men, women and children) in domestic and small agrobased industries.

Official extension agencies may have existed in old societies for the dissemination of technology, but may have accomplished little because of wrong orientation. The size of the job itself, for a massive and quick spread of available technology, calls for devising unconventional and economical methods.

The village school and college, the youth club, the newspapers, the radio, are some institutions that can be used for this task. The technology can be communicated easily to the more literate youth in the village school and college who may be given the responsibility of taking it to all the families in the village. Newspapers and radios can pour details of the know-how daily, news far more important than much of what is traditionally served for consumption mostly of the urban elites. Youth is inquisitive by nature, and involving them in the dissemination of technological know-how will naturally arouse their creative interest for new innovations.

Such changes in attitudes and methods and the choice of appropriate technology - rather than the imitation of foreign technology per se - should be considered the very important first "technological revolution" in Asia.

Finally, the education system: modern education in most Asian countries has come to mean a systematic process of alienation between the student and the rural life. The purpose of education has been to create a middle class to serve the state and the capitalist sector of the economy. To come out of the rut of rural life while leaving the rural society behind,has been used as the basic motivation for schooling. Despise of manual labour has been built into the education system.

This functionally irrelevant and socially parasitic education system must be uprooted. Education cannot be separated from life and yet be useful to life. The best school is life itself. One has to be in the thick of it and be given the scientific-analytical equipment and world-historical perspective to understand and contribute to it. For this, very major educational reform is called for.

The change cannot come easily. The problem is made difficult by its sheer size and the long gestation period in producing teachers: there are so many to educate, and where does one get the new teachers? Even China seventeen years after the communist takeover, preceded by a decade-and-half of base area work in integration with the rural masses, had a disastrous record to show in 1962 in its seats of higher learning[1]:

> " One of the major consequences of the reemphasis on professionalism was a reduction in the number of university students from worker and peasant families and a corresponding increase in those from the families of senior cadres and the 'exploiting classes' ... Thus at Peking University the number of students from worker and peasant families fell from nearly 67 percent in 1958 to only 38 percent in 1962, while the number of students of 'exploiting class' background more than doubled. Many of the university's professors were contemptuous of proletarian students, referring to them as 'coarse teacups not amenable to fancy carving' and resenting the fact that such students had obtained university places by means of 'political ladders'. Of 237 students admitted to the eight departments of natural science in 1958 only 45 graduated with their original class, the others having been expelled or held back ....
>
> At Peking Technical College more than 800 of the 919 cadres and military men sent there as students were 'weeded out', as were 200 at Tringhua. Of 108 students expelled from Peking Commercial College, some 94 percent were of working class origin. ... Han Suyin, a well informed and favoured visitor to China, has written (1967): ' investigations into the universities and senior middle schools in the cities provided a shock; after seventeen years of socialist China, over 40 percent of the students were still from bourgeois, landlord, and capitalist families, even if these were only five percent of the population '. "

Obviously, the soft attitude towards the teachers in China, and the expectation that they would embrace the new outlook so easily if only sent to the village periodically, were ill-founded, and while the revolution was busy handling the more visible problems, a quiet counter-revolution of fundamental and long-run importance was gaining ground. The reemphasis of professionalism perhaps provided only a cover for getting rid of proletarian students against whom prejudices among the elitist teaching community seem to have been deep and unshaken.

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[1] Edgar Snow, The Long Revolution, Random House, New York, 1971, p.119

With such evidence available now from the Chinese experience a correct choice of leadership for educational reform should be of fundamental importance. The problem will be less acute to the extent that progressive intellectuals, taking their lesson from history, start remoulding themselves and to the extent possible start reorienting the education system as early as they can, even before a mass-rooted leadership takes over power. If they cannot in this sense stay ahead of the political process their usefulness to the new order when it comes will be limited, and many amongst them will feel alien to it, and may want to subvert rather than promote it.

In the meanwhile the new education process must also be started. Hope will perhaps lie in socialized student groups coming from the more oppressed families and not yet spoilt by privileges: collective involvement in efforts at transforming society, in economic and social processes of daily life of the rural masses, and collective self-study of life thus experienced by such student groups would seem to offer a more promising method for generating the new educational order and its new teachers than reliance on the good faith of the traditional teachers.

Chapter 8

BUILDING INSTITUTIONS

The need

In the previous chapter we have discussed the thrusts which are necessary to transform the rural society in the direction of the ideals which have been set out. It was also mentioned that such thrusts destroy the old and lay foundation for the new; on this foundation new institutions are to be built and consolidated. And yet, social transformation is not a one-time effort but requires many thrusts and is in fact a never ending process; this means institutions also are not to be immutable.

Question may be raised, if it was possible to carry out actions like land reform or land shaping without formal institutions, using mass meetings as decision forums, what necessitates formalization now?

The conventional response to such questioning is the need to have a "contractor" type of "neat" organization, a legal impersonal entity which conducts the affairs of the community with "managerial efficiency", with a clear division of responsibility and without confusion. We disagree with such a notion of institutions.

Institutions in our view performs the same function for a collective as a memory does for an individual: providing awareness and actuality of continuous existance, which is necessary for continuous progress and evolution. Further, it is the instrument through which a collective acts - applying its consciousness and faculties to change its environment, and in the process developing further its consciousness and faculties. On the other hand, mass meetings by themselves are discontinuous events and the collective is not "represented" in-between meetings; institutions provide this link in time, connecting the past, the present and the future, and a link in space, connecting one group with another, horizontally and vertically. This link is provided by the delegation of authority by the masses to individuals and groups. Together then, mass-meetings (all the people some of the time) and institutions (some of the people all the time) are the formal expression of a collective.

Creation of a collective personality is one of the most important tasks before a mass democracy. It represents a higher stage of human evolutions, rising above narrow individualistic striving which formed the basis of the old society. Institutions, as expressions of this personality, the new living cells, giving the society and organic unity and replacing the mechanical "efficiency" of the old system, should therefore be carefully nurtured.

The dangers

However, there is a contradiction between the movement for change and the need for stability. It is during the periods of consolidation and institutionalization that elements of resistance to change regroup and find alibis to backslide with the ostensible purpose of trimming the excesses. There is a tendency for routinization which obstructs further change and partially or totally nullifies the progress already made. Even China, as we have described, has passed through periods of stifling institutionalization, requiring further massive thrusts to break the confining mould.

In fact, like individual memory, institutions suffer from inertia, tending to preserve the past heritage and patterns. They tend to acquire a need, a logic and a method of work of their own and, once disassociated from the people, quickly degenerate and become destructive of the very reason for their existence. They legitimize resistance, and encourage negative tendencies, thereby alienating the people, who then withdraw to their private pursuits, paying only the minimum necessary obeisance to the collective. A supportive system is thus converted into a predatory structure.

Care should be taken to minimize these dangers thus inherent in institutionalization. First, form should not precede content: institutions should be allowed to evolve naturally out of a collective need and urge to work together; the concrete experience of collective action and deliberation thereon, taking into account experiences elsewhere; and systematized knowledge. Even institutions thus formed need constant vigilance. For this the people have to be aware of the possible dangers, watch their functioning critically, discuss collectively and apply the necessary correctives. This is possible at the primary level directly by the masses. At higher levels[1], where functions are delegated to representative bodies, direct mass vigilance is not possible. Some vigilance may be exercised through formal and informal bodies operating at the same level, e.g., bodies representing groups like women, youth and workers. However, these bodies, also being institutions, suffer from the same basic contradictions. The conclusion is inescapable that the struggle has to continue and the top leadership has to be committed to total mass democracy to take periodic measures to submit actions of all such institutions and their functionaries to mass scrutiny.

The logical corollary of an evolutionary process is that there can be no blue-print of an ideal institution which can be duplicated every where. Institution, as expression of collective personality, evolves out of collective action, experience and decision; it is therefore specific to each collective and cannot be transferred to another locale. The best that the leadership can do is to introduce new thought for change and encourage an intensive exchange of experience between various collectives in the process of institutionalization, leaving the decisions to the people.

The guiding principles

An evolutionary process does not imply, however, that institutions can develop without an inner logic and accountability to the society as a whole. As they evolve, they must continuously test themselves against the five basic principles of development as mentioned earlier.

We have examined the issue of the development of man while discussing the individual and the collective in Chapter 1 and have stated that the collective exists to the extent that the individuals acquiesce in its sovereignty, a principle which is built into the evolutionary process. This implies that if the collective is imposed on the individuals, they would be alienated and their growth would be inhibited.

1/ A multi-tier institutional structure is described in Chapter 9

Three other factors which alienate the individuals from the institution are: the size of the collective, its style of administration and the use of technology.

The size of the primary unit has to be such that an individual can feel a part - and an effective part - of it. Large monolithic organizations become impersonal and the individual cannot identify himself with anything tangible. The smaller groups can of course be linked together, as groups, into larger organizations for bigger tasks. In fact mass meetings and informal collective work programmes may involve a large number of people and yet, instead of alienating may promote solidarity; but while institutionalizing beginning should be made with small comprehensible groups.

Institutions by their very nature create "office", and office has traditionally been associated with status, prestige and glamour of its own, regardless of the function. The aura surrounding the office tends to attract and distract the best of people and draws them away from actual work, resulting in continuous tension within themselves and in the organization. This is then reflected in the institution's style of work: bureaucratic, technocratic, over-specialized and mystified. There is a tendency to complicate work so that people can no longer comprehend it, abdicate their decision making responsibilities and leave it to full time functionaries. These functionaries in turn, whether administrative or technical specialists, try to build up status of the office either at the cost of productive work or by over-glorifying mental work. Both are alienating.

In many historical situations, administration has been conceived as separate from and above social life. This has created vested interests in administration oriented to growth of the administrative apparatus unrelated to social needs. Preoccupation has been centered on forms (disposal of files, reporting, committee meetings) rather than action. Secrecy and specialization have mystified the administrative processes and alienated the masses from them. Within the administrative system rigid hierarchies have created distorted values and worked against spirited team work.

At the grass-roots level the fundamental task is to help the people administer themselves. There is no room here for an exclusive cadre of "administrators" who monopolize administration. The masses themselves are, collectively, the administrators who take decisions, implement them, evaluate them and exercise necessary vigilance. The leaders, and the "link cadres", do guide them by raising the relevant issues to the extent that they have thought ahead of the latter.

The youth, who have great potentialities as change-agents, should be integrated as a special force in administering the new society. Keeping the youth in a state of social awareness, conscious of their own power and responsibility to break impediments and lead society, and keeping them socialized for collective deliberation, is the way to make sure the future wins. The Katchubari-Kristapur literacy feat in Bangladesh was administered by the village youth, even small children, in a way professional administrators could never think of. The best approach to population control may be to entrust a major responsibility to high school girls in the village as a body. They will know how to create the movement that stirs up the society.

A related factor in alienating people is the use of technology beyond the comprehension of the people at a particular stage, and therefore requiring technicians and experts who are quite distinct from the masses. Technicalization at the local level should be built up with emphasis on the people understanding, acquiring and even innovating on the technology which then becomes their own. The role of a specialist is to prepare the people to internalise knowledge and not just to run the machine for them. The tasks undertaken by the collective therefore should progress from technically simple to complex as the people get ready for them.

Design of the institutions and the process of their working should be geared to the emergence of collective personality: they must encourage and generate the spirit of the collective as we have defined it in Chapter 1. Thus the rules of office, their interconnection and the functioning of the institution as a whole should not be such as to encourage individuals and groups to think in terms of personal gains in the "animalistic" sense; they must stimulate the desire to contribute to the collective and the collective process of decision-making. The emergence of the collective personality is directly dependent on the value premises on which it is predicated and which in turn determine its system of work allocation and evaluation, its distribution principles, its method of motivation and incentives, and, as a result of these operational intermediators, the initiative the people take and the pride they feel in the institution.

In designing the rules, the institutions may at times go ahead of the state of mass consciousness and require mid-course correction. This however is to be distinguished from reversal of policies resulting from forces of resistance gaining ascendency in the system. The example of China during the five years preceding the Cultural Revolution in 1966 is an example of a collective institutional shell, the commune, being used to encourage again various forms of individualistic behaviour with bureaucratic work allocation, piece work payment, steep financial incentives and phenomenal increase in the size of the private plot. The commune itself started emphasizing profits as a measure of efficiency, restoring the spirit of capitalism. The value system which backed this policy lacked sufficient faith in people and found coercion and temptations the major instruments for promoting production. It is in the reversal of this policy since 1966 that the restoration of the spirit of the collective was sought.

The working of mass democracy is the basic tenet of the approach to rural development we have discussed here. Institutions are a major vehicle to give operational content to the democracy, for democracy cannot be practised in the abstract and must be related to concrete day-to-day tasks which are performed collectively. Planning, implementation and evaluation of these specific actions are among the functions of mass democracy.

At the primary unit level, frequent (weekly?) mass meetings are the formal forums of democracy and the unit should be compact and cohesive enough to permit these meetings. All functionaries would be accountable to this general assembly for actions taken in the interval, which would be subject to review, criticism and modification.

At higher levels, meetings would be attended by elected representatives, but even these should be open to the public to the extent possible to prevent alienating secrecy; public administration needs also to be administration in public. If the representatives are not rotated there is a danger of the formation of an elite group. These representatives should also report the deliberations of higher level forums at the mass meetings to their constituents and seek their views on the various issues and plans.

Demystification of tasks and functions, accountability to the masses and the promotion of a non-elitist leadership ethic are the prerequisites of a functioning mass democracy which an institution should be designed for.

None of the above guiding principles would be purposeful - or would even be fully practicable - if the institution were not anchored on the principle of self-reliance. For instance, practising mass democracy and self-administration require autonomy; it is hard to imagine autonomy for institutions which are continuously seeking outside help. Internally, self-reliance would generate collective and individual self-respect which is the pre-condition for the development of an individual and of the collective personality.

It is important, therefore, that the institution should lay stress on self-reliance throughout its process of evolution. A compromise with this principle in the early stages in the interest of expediency would distort the value system, which would be difficult to correct at a later stage. The masses must constantly be encouraged to recognize their own creative and fighting powers and solve their own problems instead of looking for soft options.

Apart from these aspects of self-reliance, there are also sound techno-economic reasons to promote self-reliance - though not autarchy - as a method of maximum utilisation of local human and material resources (Chapter 5).

The "Link-cadre"

We have referred to the crucial and unique role which has to be played by the leadership and the cadre in the entire process of rural development from mass mobilization to institution building to the satisfactory operation of the institutions in a democratic manner. However appropriate the approach to development, and however serious the national leadership may be in implementing the policy, success will depend to a large extent on the sincerity and the ability of the cadre in mobilizing the masses into an effective collective.

The lesson from all successful rural development efforts, whether in isolated pockets as in India and Bangladesh or in a national programme as in China, is that capable and dedicated individuals have a major role in energizing the people to undertake tasks which they themselves may not have thought possible. These motivated persons have worked neither through authority nor through highly specialized skills but through personal involvement and example. For instance, the dynamism of some of the projects in Bangladesh which we have described is due to the promoters' ability to inspire the people through dedication and living fellowship; in China the revolutionary process has generated such leadership on a phenomenal scale.

A major task in rural development is to develop standards and sensitivity in the society which helps to identify leadership potential in these terms. Experience indicates that such a cadre, which has to be both disciplined and innovative, can only be welded together by sharing a common value system and an appropriate philosophy.

In discussing the fate of the community development programme in India, we have mentioned the default of the congress to heed Ghandhi's advice and to provide a committed cadre for rural transformation as one of the major causes for its failure to realize even its limited objectives. The regime was then forced to rely on the bureaucracy to implement the programme. As a recognition of the gulf between even the lowest bureaucrat and the people, a link in the form of a "village level worker" was created, whose specifications (leadership, humility, ability to work with the people, expertise, etc.) were indeed admirable, though far removed from reality. The village level worker remained a petty bureaucrat, aloof from the people and accountable only to his hierarchical superiors.

The Chinese leadership, aware of the elitist traits of the bureaucracy, relied on party workers, often local young men and women, to reach the peasants and to lead them. Ideology provided the framework within which the cadres linked the needs and aspirations of the people to the broad directions of public policy. The cadres were accountable both to the leadership and to the masses. The Liu Line departed from this concept by stressing technical competence and managerial ability more than integration with the masses; the Cultural Revolution has tried to reverse it.

Taken as a group, the link-cadres perform a political function in the highest sense of the term. They are the nervous system of a mass democracy, conveying the ideas and consciousness of the masses to the leaders, who systematize them into a basis of action; carrying these back to the masses in an undistorted form; triggering appropriate responses in the far-flung collectives; carrying the subsequent diverse experiences back to the leadership; and thus integrating the society through a continuous two-way exchange involving reflection, action and conceptualization, permitting both autonomy and coordination.

Chapter 9

THE SYSTEM AT WORK

> • "Much of China's overall perfomance can be explained "simply" in terms of a very high investment and savings ratios that were attained by 1953-54 and were more or less maintained thereafter. ... ... To attain these the old class structures were overthrown by revolution. That is what lies behind "simply". 1/

Planning in the large

In the previous two chapters we have discussed the major tasks involved in the process of transforming society and the broad principles of building appropriate institutions in a mass democracy. These tasks aim at the creation, through a series of intermediate stages of an appropriate economic structure and superstructure. At the early stages, the state of consciousness of the masses usually calls for measures like land reform in the countryside and concommitant measures elsewhere. Further steps of a higher order would be undertaken in subsequent stages. At any given stage involvement of the masses in concrete activities and interaction between the leadership and the masses raised their consciousness and prepare them for more advanced measures subsequently. The existence of a consciousness gap between the masses and the leaders and contradiction within the leadership need also to be narrowed. The sequencing of these measures in various stages, and the resolution of the intra-leadership conflicts is the essence of what may be called "Planning in the Large" -- essentially a political (ideological and mobilizational) task.

Planning in the small

While planning the large mobilizes the people for fundamental social transformation and economic leaps, the detailed management of the economy for sustained rise in production and economic growth is no less

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1/ Gurley, J, ibid. p. 400-401

important. This is the task of "planning in the small", which receives particular attention in the interval between successive thrusts when the society is consolidating on the gains from the previous leap. The institutions which we have discussed in the previous chapter are the instrument for planning both in the large and the small.

The precise institutional framework that will emerge at any given stage is a matter of evolution; it may, however, be instructive to discuss the process of planning in the small with reference to a hypothetical case. The situation we have in mind may be a medium-sized country at a stage in the transformation process at which the society has sufficiently absorbed the basic values and created the necessary institutional infrastructure in order that it can afford to concentrate on the more technical task of systematic and coordinated economic planning.

The organization tree

In the Asian rural scene, the basic unit of community life is the village. Between this lowest unit, the village, and the highest entity, the state or nation, there are several intermediate administrative units such as the Union, Thana, Sub-division, District, Division and Province in the ascending order with a higher echelon consisting of several immediately lower echelons. For example in South Asia a Union consists of several villages, a Thana is composed of several Unions and so on. The number of these intermediate units vary from country to country depending on the geographical area, the size of population and the level of technology. For illustration, we take a five-tier system: village - union - thana - district - centre in the ascending order. Each unit in the five-tier system has its own institutional arrangement. The functionaries are chosen democratically.

In this five-tier system there are two 3-tier entities: (a) village - union - thana and (b) thana - district - nation. (a) is the pyramid of communal development in the countryside with thana as the apex; (b) is the formal governmental machinery linking the rural "communes" and holding them together. We will now elaborate on the functional responsibilities of the communal entity, viz., village - union - thana (or commune).

The village

A major impediment to the modernization of agriculture is small-scale farming and petty commodity production in fragmented and scattered plots. Initial land reform aggravates this problem via the creation of still smaller-scale proprietors. These plots are much too small from considerations of economies of scale in production, marketing and deployment of technology. Major investments in irrigation, flood control, road building, land reclamation, afforestation etc. are beyond the scope of small-scale farming. A consolidation of small holdings large enough to carry out these activities and develop support industries producing agricultural machinery mainly is called for. This is done in our three-tier scheme village - union - thana. Formally, land is owned by the thana.

The village represents the agricultural basic unit for production, distribution, labour management and accounting. Although land is formally owned by the thana, from the point of view of management, it, together with animals and implements, effectively belongs to the village. The team is responsible for production planning over the crop year and for a particular quota of sales at planned prices (to be discussed later) to the state procurement agency. The union may help the team in preparing the plan. Income is calculated at the village level after deduction of expenses on account of production and capital accumulation. A part of this income is contributed to the union for agricultural taxes, village welfare funds and the reserve fund. The rest of the cash and kind are distributed to the team members on the basis of family needs and differential labour contributions corresponding to the state of mass consciousness that has been attained. The contribution of the individual is measured in a mass meeting on the basis of his own appraisal and collective assessment.

In the same way, resource allocation decisions at the village level are also a fully collective affair. The setting up of objectives, the evaluation of projects, etc., are not done by agents or technical formulae external to the consciousness of the masses which is sovereign; these are done instead at mass meetings where mass consciousness unfolds through interaction and the masses progressively evolve and improve upon their own standards of evaluation through collective decision-making, action and experience.

The union

The union's activities comprise those that are beyond the scope of a single village and involve several villages: food processing, animal breeding, water conservancy, land reclamation and improvement, road-building, transport (e.g. trucks), supply of power, repair of agricultural machinery, primary education, health clinics, etc.

The union is responsible for year-round employment within its boundary. For example, it maintains teams for well-sinking, electrical work, etc. Such teams consist mainly of workers who may not be temporarily needed in their regular jobs. It also performs trade and commerce activities such as running shops for consumer goods and agricultural inputs, repair of hardwares, bicycles, etc.

The union also plays a coordinating role for the member villages. It allocates machinery to village production teams and repairs and maintains them. The purchase of new machinery by a village is done in consultation with the union so as to harmonize the competing needs of different villages with the available supply. The union's funds as also the reserve funds maintained by the villages with the union may be used for purchasing machinery and other productive assets, not necessarily on the basis of a village's own contribution and population but on equity considerations.

The union pays its employees wages which are within the same range as the remuneration of village production team members. The surplus left over after deduction of costs from revenue is the source of the union's capital accumulation and its reserve.

The thana

At this stage of development, the thana is the highest expression of the collective personality. It integrates the community. In it is manifested the living and concrete identification of the people with the collective through which they get a sense of belonging and security while for larger collectives - the district and the nation - the identification is more spontaneous and abstract. The thana is also the basic unit of self-reliance, maximum technological and distributional interdependence and detailed planning.

The thana is responsible for production planning of the unions on the basis of field plans coming from the village teams. It mobilizes man-power for inter-union work and also for any district project it may be called upon to participate in at the thana level. It runs factories to support agriculture, constructs public works, maintains middle schools and hospitals and plans major investments and capital construction projects. It buys the tractors and other major agricultural machinery from the district and state factories: a substantial part of its income comes from these agricultural machinery stations. The thana factories also repair and manufacture some agricultural implements. Veteran workers make innovations sometimes with the assistance of state factories. A major supply of socially motivated technical workers come from its middle schools.

The thana is a self-reliant region aiming at provision of the articles of consumption that the masses need in order to have an adequate standard of living. The thanas together also have to meet the food and raw material requirements at the district and state level. To do this job, agricultural mechanization is its fundamental economic task. It also provides defence to its inhabitants and fights natural calamities.

Through all these activities, the thana is the focal point of communal life.

The planning ladder: bottom-up, top-down

While the thana is the basic cell of national life, communities are not isolated human groups. Their economic activities are linked together by national economic planning.

The national plan is the result of interactions between the higher and lower tiers both at the pre-planning stage and at the stage of systematic plan preparation. At the pre-planning stage, agencies responsible for planning at various levels initiate, collect, examine and disseminate ideas and exercises on plan perspective, goals, strategies and concrete possibilities. From their concrete experiences, the lower levels know what is feasible on the ground; their ideas and aspirations are also the more important since it is their initiatives which have to be released. The higher levels have a broader view of issues and grasp the national and regional dimensions thereof; they also see local innovations and achievements in the light of broader perspectives and transmit their significance throughout the nation.

These pre-plan ideas and exercises are absorbed in the systematic planning work that follows.

At the lowest level, the village prepares a production plan on the basis of its resource position and past experience. All the village plans are assembled at the Union level. The union then makes its own plan integrating its own proposed activities with the village plans. The union plans go to the thana. The thana in turn integrates the union plans with its own proposed activities. And the thana plan is drafted and sent to the district. In the same way, the district plan is drafted and sent to the centre. The centre assembles all the "district" plans and the proposals made by various ministries for the central sector.

Naturally, the plan drafts thus assembled are not necessarily consistent. The centre strings these drafts and proposals together after the necessary consistency checks and adjustments. The national plan draft thus emerges.

The lower level plan targets that were originally sent to the higher levels may not match the ones stemming from the central draft plan. Further discussion and deliberation at the lower levels may be needed for revised estimates to be prepared and transmitted upwards. The flow from below to the top then takes place again and a second round of coordination at the centre is undertaken. Several such iterations may be necessary before the final plan is made. Fortunately, due to the principle of self-reliance, the thanas are connected through relatively weak economic linkages. This helps reduce the number of iterations.

National planning, even under the full participation of the masses, can hardly be perfect. A complex balancing and allocating task that planning implies can be done only approximately. Unforeseen favourable conditions such as the discovery of a new method of a new resource or an inspiring new example of mass mobilization may take place during the plan period. Unintended information gaps might also have slipped in. All such events may call for mid-course revisions of the planned activities at appropriate levels.

Chapter 10

" ACTION RESEARCH " : PROBING MASS CONSCIOUSNESS

Social transformation as we have outlined is a process of interaction between committed voluntary human action and objective forces of history. The latter consist of the state of transformation of nature (e.g., physical capital), the state of arts (e.g., science, technology and social culture), and that of mass consciousness. These are not only accumulated stocks but also flows which interact mutually. Together they circumscribe the range of feasible choices for voluntary action. Those who wish to steer social change need to grasp historical forces thus acting on the society, and above all must assess the state of mass consciousness which is the fundamental driving force of history.

This requires investigations which are sensitive not only to the static but also to the dynamic characters of mass consciousness. The latter have two facets: the spontaneous currents as emerging from history and their interactions; and the responsiveness of these currents, in their complex interactions, to change-stimuli, and the new patterns that tend thereby to emerge.

Conventional social research has been preoccupied with the study of static aspects of mass consciousness and of its spontaneous currents. Such "observational" research is valuable, but is an incomplete guide to social action unaided by knowledge of responsiveness to change-stimuli. This knowledge can be gained only through concrete involvement in social processes and through the generation of new processes of mass action and interaction (e.g., mutual aid and cooperation, collective administration of scarce agricultural inputs, collective management of property, land consolidation, irrigation works by contributory labour, mobilizing local youth for literacy drives). Initiating, steering and scientifically studying such processes are an important task for leaders as well as for others actively wishing to contribute to the accumulation of experience and knowledge relevant for transforming society.

Such "action research", revealing as it does the potentials of the society, the "proto-history" as it were which is a part of history itself, is invaluable for developing a line of action for transforming society that is not ahead of mass consciousness and hence alienating, nor behind and hence needlessly conservative. In the process, these will also strengthen the bond between the leaders and the masses, generate cadres that will be required at the very inception of mass democracy, develop experience in social administration, help raise consciousness of the masses involved, and serve also to mobilize them for the larger political task.

Such probing, whose value is independent of the stage of history, should be a continuous task. While a mass democracy makes possible the widest application of such action, the latter is no less important in the historical stage preceding the formal ascendence of mass power. The greater the accumulation during this stage of experience, knowledge, values and human bonds that such investigations provide, the richer in constructive possibilities the society will be when the new order emerges. It is in this light that the recent more progressive initiatives, like some of the efforts described in chapters two and three, may be viewed, and attempts to seek "area" and "activity" bases to promote such initiatives further, encouraged.